

DEVELOPING THE TECHNIQUE OF CHORAL SPEAKING

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
HISTORY OF CHORAL SPEAKING	5
Origins	5
Medieval Developments	7
Recent Developments	8
Leadership	13
VALUES OF CHORAL SPEAKING	14
Appreciation and Enjoyment of Poetry	14
Self Confidence	15
Social Understanding	15
Improved Speech	16
Dramatic Effects	17
HOW TO ORGANIZE A SPEECH CHOIR	18
Director's Need of Resources	18
The Rehearsal Procedure	20
Costumes	23
Settings	24
THE DIRECTOR AND THE SPEAKING CHOIR	24
A Competent Director	24
Conducting the Choir	27
MATERIALS FOR CHORAL SPEAKING	29
Choice of Materials	29
The First Selections	29
Type of Material	30

Poetry for Verse Choirs	31
Ballads	35
FUNDAMENTALS OF CHORAL SPEAKING	36
Basic Requirement	36
Essential Tools for Artistry in Speech	38
FORMS OF PRESENTATION OF THE SPEECH CHOIR	40
Reading in Unison	40
Dialogue	41
Line-a-Child	41
Antiphonal	42
Solo and Chorus	42
CHORAL SPEAKING AS AN AID TO WORSHIP	42
Youth's Need in Worship	42
The Need of the Church	44
Meeting the Need Through Choric Speech	46
AN EASTER PROGRAM OF CHORAL SPEAKING	48
Easter Moods for Choral Speaking	48
Easter Selections for Choral Speaking Programs	48
Settings and Costumes for Easter	49
DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS	50
When to Give Public Demonstrations	50
Difficulties	51
Dangers	53
Conclusions	53

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF CHORAL SPEAKING	54
Benefits	54
Limitations	54
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY	57
APPENDIX	61

INTRODUCTION

A most interesting thing has occurred in the cultural life of the American people; a conscious feeling of a need of better speech has been developing for a number of years, and at the same time, a fine and effective art was beginning its history in the birth of an idea which was to answer fully that need. Such a fortunate coincidence seems well nigh miraculous.

The art of choric speech is a very old one but the art of choral speaking that springs from it is new and vitally alive, and well-fitted to this virile age when even the arts have sweep and flare.

Graduates of 35 or 40 years ago from select seminaries for young ladies may have made their appearance at commencement exercises in "A Group Recitation by the Senior Elocution Class". In flowing white dresses, drilled to perfect poise, graceful bodily movement, and good speech unison, they recited "The Legend of the Organ Builder" or "Au Italiens" now high, now low, now louder, now softer, now slower, now faster, and awed admiring relatives and friends. Although no one knew just why, this group work was accepted and applauded as a part of the very superior training received at such private schools.

Frequently, when the young lady returned to her home town and responded to the urging of well-disposed friends to give a solo recitation at a local social gathering, she experienced her first misgivings toward the senior elocution class.

Except for the few who always commended anything remotely esthetic, she sensed polite patronage in the "Very nice, my dear", and "How lovely", and similar pleasantries that rewarded her efforts. She resented the tolerant smile of her bachelor uncle. No paternal affection had prejudiced him toward elocution.

The worst awakening came from her young escort. He had been graduated from military academy two years before and his training had been more concerned with facts than fads. She waited for his compliment, and when it was not forthcoming, she refused to be ignored. "You did not tell me how you liked my recitation," she said to him. With the characteristic frankness of the military youth, he smiled and blandly replied, "Oh, we always laughed at the girls who went in for that sort of thing."

She was a discriminating young woman and reason told her that there must be something wrong with the senior elocution class. If her recitation had been a true thing, it would have been accepted by any intelligent auditor, and she had respect for the intelligence of her young military friend and of her bachelor uncle.

Similar experiences by other young women, confided to their younger sisters, gradually weakened the enthusiasm toward elocution, individually and collectively. The very word "elocution" undeservedly became synonymous with "artificiality" and "affectation" and fell into disrepute. As a class exercise it finally

disappeared.

Thus a great speech art of tremendous potentialities was discarded because no one established and spread a technique by which it might have ascended to a parallel of the present day singing chorus.

The movement to recapture the splendid tradition of speaking verse has been gaining momentum for the past decade. School programs everywhere last spring listed numbers by the verse-speaking choir in grade and high schools. The speech departments in some of the leading colleges over the nation present an evening's program by the choric group at least once each semester as a part of the college schedule programs. Choral speaking, often called choric speech or verse-speaking, is the interpretation of poetry or poetic prose by several or many voices speaking as one. It is speaking in unison, in groups and by parts. It is bringing words to life - giving the written symbol a new vitality through adequate oral expression.

The idea of a group interpretation of poetry, as evidenced by the speaking choirs has little in common with the old-fashioned elocution group recitation. In the hands of a wise teacher the interpretation of a choir will never become mechanical or monotonous; nor will expression ever be sacrificed to rhythm. And membership in a speaking choir brings unlimited opportunities for individual improvement of speech.

Just as one needs some equipment for intelligent written language - paper, pen, ink, then capital letters, commas,

periods and marks of different kinds - so in spoken language one needs a voice, hearing, then tone, rhythm, articulation, enunciation, vitality, feeling, resonance. Choral speaking is one way of improving this equipment. A talking world reminds us at every hand the need of this improvement.

The purpose of this research has not been that of setting down a specified method of study. The aim has been to contribute some workable ideas and to give some practical guidance for the development of choral speaking for teachers of speech in their attempts to develop this art. It is sincerely hoped that experimentation in this art will result in greater appreciation and enjoyment of poetry, that better speech patterns will be developed, more distinct articulation, richer resonance, greater vocal melody, and more sensitive tone color. "Group feeling" should result in finer student cooperation, freedom from self-consciousness, and greater happiness through actually bringing to vocal life the thoughts of the masters of literature as well as the fun poems.

Books in the field of choral speaking are few in number. This study seeks to meet the growing demand for constructive suggestions to be given on the what, why, how and when regarding choral speaking. Special comments have been made on the usefulness of choral speaking in religious worship, followed by a suggested Easter program. Included are poems with arrangements as to their choral interpretation. However, they are merely suggestive. It is wise to let the arrangements grow out of

group discussion and pupil suggestion.

HISTORY OF CHORAL SPEAKING

Origins

The verse-speaking choir is a revival of a form of expression known to humanity from the very beginnings of communal life. Through the ages people have read together in unison. Leading exponents of the speaking choir claim that this form of expression is a revival of an old Greek form of interpretive art such as that used in the Attic tragedy, where the chorus gave expression to the moral and religious sentiments evoked by the play.¹

The Greek Chorus. Fine examples of choral speaking flourished in Greece over twenty-five hundred years ago. People went to great festivals and open air plays at that time with the same enthusiasm they now attend the athletic games. The Greek tragic drama had a chorus which numbered 50 at one time. It was regarded as the chief actor. This chorus addressed a single player as if it were one actor. It used the pronoun "I", not "we". It told what was happening off stage when the solo actors were not on the scene. The Greek chorus chanted its lines.² All students of Greek literature are familiar with

¹Keppie, E. E. The Teaching of Choric Speech, p. 9.

²Op. cit. p. 21.

the importance of the chorus to drama and to religious festivals such as the worship ceremonies in honor of Dionysus. The chorus of maidens or elders was a unifying and beautifying force in drama in the days of Aeschylus.¹ In the high roofed hall of a great lord, lighted by wavering torches, a merry group of feasters celebrated an athletic victory and listened to a chantily choir. In the great outdoor theatre at Athens, twenty thousand people sat on stone benches to witness a great drama. The light was that of the warm southern sun. No off-stage orchestra nor subtle lighting established the mood of tragedy. But a chorus of Elders, grave old men, created the atmosphere of impending doom as they solemnly chanted together.²

Hebrew Worship. The Hebrews used an antiphonal chorus of a reading and a response.³ There was a continual dispute by early authors as to the exact form of expression for the psalms and songs of Hebrew worship. Whether Deborah and her chorus of maidens sang or chanted their victory over Pharaoh at the crossing of the Red Sea is not known. Perhaps the procession of pilgrims at the Feast of Tabernacles praised the Lord with singing, and perhaps the pilgrims chanted their antiphonal expressions of praise, and it may be that both forms were used in their worship. Who can say?

¹Jebb, R. C. Greek Literature, pp. 56, 62, 66.
 Perry, Ed. D. Greek Literature, pp. 65-66.

²Robinson, M. P. and Thurston, R. L. Poetry Arranged for the Speaking Choir, pp. 15, 16.

³Hedde, W. G. and Brigrance, W. N., American Speech. p. 401.

Medieval Developments

Writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries paint an interesting picture of the wandering poet's life in England and on the Continent. Although variously called *trouvères*, *minnesinger*, *troubadour*, *joculatore*, *scop* and *minstrel*, these gleemen led similar lives.

No one thought of weddings, banquets, or any other occasion of rejoicing without minstrels who chanted, sang, or recited their lays. Kings and rich nobles had their own companies of minstrels whom they delighted in hearing; and traveling men whiled away long evenings at the inns by listening to these gleemen.

Light tripping ballads and romantic lays of heroic deeds and love took the place of the theatre in popular entertainment. Old English poetry abounds with repetition of ideas and pictures, making the ballads in that day of little reading and fewer books the easy possession of all. One can readily imagine the assembled listeners at the inn or banquet hall joining with the minstrels in the chanting recitation of refrains so frequently repeated.¹

¹Jusserand, J. J. *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages*. Pt. II, Ch. 1.

Recent Developments

The movement for the interpretation of poetry and the improvement of speech has begun to seize the imagination of men and women in so many countries that it may be interesting to trace very briefly the development of this work.

Great Britain. The revival of choral speaking was not confined to one country but it received its greatest impetus at the Glasgow, Scotland Festival in 1922, when John Massfield, after hearing the solo readings given by Miss Marjorie Gullan's pupils, suggested the possibility of uniting those voices in unison speaking and suggested choruses from "The Trojan Women" as material. From the training of a group of speakers in the Greek drama chorus came Miss Gullan's inspiration to experiment with Scotch ballads, other poetry of choric value, and passages from the Bible. In 1925 she organized the London verse-speaking choir.

As a result of Miss Gullan's work, choral speaking became a regular feature of the Scottish, Irish and English poetry reading festivals. The Scotch, Irish, and English, reared with their ballads, had never lost their love for poetry and the joy of reading it and of hearing it read.¹

Miss Gullan has made two trips to America to further the development of this art. They were made in 1933 and 1935. She brought additional interest to established work and sometimes

¹Corp, G. Choral Speaking. p. 45.

gave the incentive which started activities elsewhere.

Miss C. deBanke of England started her successful choir in Capetown in 1924. (She is now director of the acclaimed Welleeley choir.)¹

In 1932 the Oxford Verse-Speaking Festivals were instituted.² Today England is considered the leader among countries in the development of this art.

Germany. A speaking choir belonging to the Youth Movement, labor or other group, was called Sprechchor. It seems that labor group choirs and their recitations became so numerous that they were regulated as to the extent of their activity. The Labon method of movement was often combined with choric recitation. One of the outstanding conductors of choirs in Germany was Dr. W. Leyhausen. His work at Cologne began as early as 1915 and in 1922 he had his own speech institute within Berlin University where he continued his work until the outbreak of World War II.³ At Berlin University he produced choric drama of a highly artistic kind with especially trained students. He tried to restore the original performances of Greek plays as nearly as possible, and was so successful that the Greek government invited him and his players to give a performance at the Acropolis in Athens. Even though they spoke in German, the audience of Greeks gave them a tremendous ovation.⁴

¹Dewitt, M. E. Practical Methods in Choral Speaking. p. 17.

²Hedde and Brigrance. Op. cit., p. 402.

³Downe, S. W. Quarterly Journal of Speech 22:689-670. Dec. 1936.

⁴Dewitt. Op. cit., p. 18.

Switzerland. At Dornach the Steiner group has developed a notable mass technique which produces unusual synchronization, clarity, strength and projection of purpose. There was an organized chorus by 1926-27, and a record of performances by 1928. The writer understands that, contrary to popular opinion, the programs are not always necessarily confined to mystic or to heavy selections. The speech element of the work has been primarily furthered by Frau Dr. Steiner and is an outgrowth of the group's previous work in Eurythmy which unifies movement and sound and may be called "visible speech" in connection with spoken poetry, or "tone-eurythmy" in connection with song.

France. They began the use of choral speaking in the primary grades before the second World War. France had used the polyphonic and simultanesme type of work in the French theatre previous to this time.¹

America. In 1932 America had her first book on choral speaking, "The Teaching of Choral Speech" by Elizabeth Keppie of Pasadena, California. Miss Keppie's work as instructor of choral verse-speaking, Extension Division, University of California, aroused enthusiastic interest on the West Coast in the new field. Many experiments in various styles of rhythmical expression and so-called "dramatization of poetry" resulted. Some of this work was erroneously considered to be choral speaking.

¹Corp, C. Op. cit., p. 5.

Since the few teachers outside of California who knew anything of choral speaking were so far removed from one another and, until 1931¹, lacked the contact which a national poetry-speaking festival gives, the movement did not spread rapidly. It appeared only as the result of individual effort in widely separated cities.

Marjorie Oullan, in an article entitled "Verse speaking choirs in America", recorded finding an encouraging number of such choirs in a single trip across the continent: at the Pennsylvania Women's College, a choir which had been in existence since 1930, Miss Wanda Kerst, conductor; at St. Louis, Maryville College, the Agnes Curren's verse-speaking choir; at St. Louis, Principia School, an English verse-speaking choir conducted by Anne E. Jenkins, and a French verse-speaking choir conducted by Mr. Robins, head of the French Department; in Detroit at the Sherrard Intermediate School, a choir composed of boys and girls from 12 to 16 years of age, conducted by Marion Louise Miller; in Denver, Colorado, University of Denver, Mrs. Mabel Smith Reynold's speaking choir.²

In Madison, Wisconsin city schools, Carrie Rasmussen has very successfully used choral speaking as a technique for improving voice and diction in little children and developing in them appreciation and enjoyment of poetry.

¹First National Poetry Speaking Contest held at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., Apr. 2 and 3, 1931.

²Good Speech. Oct.-Dec., 1933.

Even so incomplete a record proves that choral speaking has taken hold in the United States. During the last decade we have seen this phase of speech make a place for itself in modern education.¹

Choral speaking of poetry which is a regular feature of the well-known Oxford Festival occupied a similar place in the Southern California Festival of the Allied Arts, May 10 to June 1, 1935, Los Angeles, California.

In the United States the movement has extended chiefly to the high schools, colleges, and universities, although verse-speaking choirs in churches and women's clubs have been organized in many parts of the country. Valuable service has been given by the Extension Division of Illinois University, and by the University Extension Division of the Massachusetts Department of Education, which offered, in 1936, a course in choric speaking designed especially for public school teachers.

Among choral speaking choirs which are heard often in concerts and not infrequently over the radio may be mentioned the choir at Wellesley College.

Many colleges have added courses in choral speaking to the speech curriculums, in both the regular and the summer sessions. The Dramatic and Speech Institute, University of Wisconsin, Professor Ethel T. Rockwell, director, had from 1934 to 1939 inclusive, a course taught by Georgia M. Corp. Interesting work

¹Corp, G. Op. cit., p. 7.

was done at the Lakeshore Theatre Colony, Westford, Massachusetts, during the summer of 1935-36 where Dr. Fleischman of Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, had a choir of 40 members. As early as 1922-23, Professor Alice W. Mills, now director of English speech, Mount Holyoke, did pioneer choral speaking work at the State University of Iowa. In the fall of 1933, choral speaking classes were offered by her at Mount Holyoke. A course given for credit was added to the curriculum there in the fall of 1935. Miss Cecile deBanke taught an intensive course in choral speaking in Gloucester, Massachusetts, August, 1940, under the auspices of the Gloucester School of the Theatre that proved of incalculable value. Eighteen states were represented in that enrollment.

Leadership

The rapid growth of the movement from primary schools to universities makes compiling a complete record of contributions to its progress impossible. A brief list limited to those who made distinct contributions in writing would include: John Masfield, Marjorie Gullan, Gordon Bottomley, Gertrude Kerby, Clarissa Graves, Emma Grant Meader, Cecile deBanke, Elizabeth Keppie, Carrie Rasmussen, Agnes Curren Hamm, Mona Swann, Marion Robinson, Rozetta Thurston, Vida R. Sutton, Wallace B. Nichols, T. S. Elliot, Louise Abney, and Clive Sansom.¹

¹Corp, O. Loc. cit., p. 8, 9, 10.

VALUES OF CHORAL SPEAKING

In discussing the educational values of choral speaking, let us see what choral speaking is contributing to the enjoyment and appreciation of literature, to personality growth, to the development of character, and to better speech.

Appreciation and Enjoyment of Poetry

For a long time, teachers of literature have been seeking motivation for the study of poetry; it has been found in choral speaking.¹ There are hundreds of boys and girls, and men and women, who, though they are deeply sensitive to the appeal of poetry, are too reserved or too self-conscious to speak it alone. Such people gain the deep satisfaction which comes of speaking poetry aloud, when they can do so in the company with others. Many of them are quite unaware that they care about speaking poetry, and would certainly never find out that they did, if the discovery depended upon solo verse-speaking. Choral speaking develops a love of poetry because it brings poetry to life. The student feels the measured rhythm of poetry, and learns to appreciate its vivid pictures. The members of the speech choir are benefited further because they are being acquainted with the poetic literature of their own and other countries and they unconsciously form a deep appreciation for

¹Abney, L. Choral Speaking Arrangements for the Upper Grades. p. 30.

for the beauty of all literature.¹

Self Confidence

One of the most important educational values of choral speaking is the overcoming of fear and the gaining of self-confidence on the part of those who participate. When students are asked to read alone, they mumble. They are inhibited, for they feel embarrassed about reading poetry aloud alone. But if the self-conscious student reads aloud with others, he interprets with abandon, for the swinging rhythm takes possession of him and he does not feel conspicuous but self-confident. Incidentally, members of a speaking choir often discover when they gather courage and practice with others in this way that they possess voices capable of interpreting alone.²

Social Understanding

One blessing that all students have in common, whatever their individual differences, is their mother tongue. They may divide into sororities and fraternities, into religious sects, and political cliques, but all do speak - after a fashion - the same language. The teachers of speech perform a social function in utilizing this link to band students together in some form of

¹Hedde and Brigrance. Op. cit., p. 402.

²Gullan, W. Choral Speaking. p. 2.

activity. Here all social distinctions are sublimated. Man is a social animal; he likes to be with his fellow men. He likes to eat with others, and where fraternity spirit is strong, the song-fests around the dinner table are of great joy to the participants. It is good for our too individualized 20th century men and women to come together in this way in order to share an artistic experience. Who does not feel a thrill along his spine when he repeats the Salute to the Flag with thousands of his fellow citizens?¹

Improved Speech

The participants, as well as the audience, are aware of improved speech through verse-speaking. The students, reading together, form habits of speaking accurately and distinctly. Their speech becomes correct and expressive, for good choir work is impossible without perfection of speech and beauty of voice. In following the instructions of the conductor the students learn how to enunciate well. They learn how to train their ears, to be more alert to correct sounds and language patterns. As a result of work in the choir the student develops a more resonant tone and a speaking tone that is beautiful and expressive. He should, however, carry over his improvements in choral speech to his individual speech if he is to become an effective speaker.

¹Crocker and Eich. Oral Reading. p. 138.

Dramatic Effects

In his play, Abraham Lincoln, John Drinkwater employs the device, familiar to us from the use of the chorus in Greek drama, of advancing his ideas by means of "chroniclers" who recite singly and in unison. Communal reading is capable of creating unusual dramatic effects, and when it is well done there are few audiences who do not like it. Edgar Allen Poe declared that when he was looking around for the most universal device to employ as the structural unit of his poem "The Raven", he chose the refrain. For the refrain is, of course, of communal origin. Who among us has not sat around a campfire and chanted a refrain as some narrator recited a ballad or sang a song? The refrain is indigenous to group recitation and is therefore particularly impressive when given choral treatment. Verse choirs speaking in refrain, antiphonally or in unison, produce dramatic effects obtainable in no other way. Shakespeare, of course, used the refrain in Macbeth. The play opened to reveal the three witches, who spoke first singly and then in unison.¹

¹Crocker and Rich. Op. cit., p. 138.

HOW TO ORGANIZE A SPEECH CHOIR

Director's Need of Resources

To start with the director must have these resources at hand:

A group of people who want to participate in a speaking choir;

An objective, preferably an occasion upon which the choir can share the harvest of its labors with others outside the group;

A library of poetry adapted to choral expression, extensive enough to furnish material appropriate to the choir and the occasion and characterized by both variety and unity;

Time, a large portion, more than any who has not tried this form of expression would think necessary.

Classify the Voices. The first step of the director is to become acquainted with the voices. If he has had no previous opportunity to do this, he should hear each one read and take notes which will help him to retain the connection between names and voices.

While each person reads the director should try to classify the pitch to which the voice returns most frequently, especially on such downward inflections as usually accompany the end of a

thought or sentence. He will find that mature women will average slightly below middle C on the piano and men about an octave lower.¹

Meanwhile each member of the choir may be asked to read for the whole group a poem he likes and thinks would be appropriate for choral interpretation. If any suitable material is brought to light, it will be a source of satisfaction to the choir to know that the poem to be used was chosen by its own members. The plan of having the group vote upon the possibilities starts the choir with a democratic and cooperative spirit.

Arrangement of the Choir. Before arranging his choir members in their permanent positions, the director will need to know their relative heights. Also in the director's arrangements should appear the grouping of dark, medium, and light voices in their own respective classifications. Generally speaking, light voices are used for appeal or question; dark voices for response or answer.

With this information before him the director will diagram his arrangement of speakers, for it is important that they rehearse in their permanent positions. The ideal is to have the group in as compact a formation as possible and to have voices of the same pitch together. If all the tallest speakers have medium voices and the shortest have either low or high, a charming pyramid effect is possible, but the director will

¹Robinson and Thurston. Op. cit., p. 33.

seldom be so fortunate. Considering sound always as of first importance, he will arrange his choir to look as good as possible. A very small group of three or four had best stand in a single curved row. A larger number should stand in two or more rows to make a square rather than a long, narrow formation. Each row should be elevated above the one in front. A series of curved or angled steps deep enough for comfortable standing furnishes an ideal basis of arrangement.¹

Number of Voices. Of how many voices should the choir consist? It is difficult to obtain the effects of group work with less than eight. And in so small a group each member must be an advanced student. At the other extreme, a group as large as 50 can be handled without too much difficulty; but the ideal group is about 15 strong.²

The Rehearsal Procedure

Every member of the choir should be made to feel the importance of full attendance at every rehearsal. The most carefully planned effect, the most minutely timed pause may be ruined by one choir member who missed a previous practice period.

Introducing a Poem. The director who introduces a poem to his choir by reading it to them may well arouse their enthusiasm for it and go forward establishing a mood. He may

¹Robinson and Thurston. Op. cit., p. 34.

²Crocker and Eich. Op. cit., p. 140.

also give the choir the unfortunate impression that he is creating a pattern for them to follow. The one who lets the choir stumble through the poem for itself the first time may be taking the longer way around, but finds himself on the shorter way home. It is always desirable for the choir to feel that it is expressing itself and not the director.

The First Reading. After the first reading a very profitable period may be spent in discussion of the poem, in some cases its history or background, in all cases its whole meaning, atmosphere and spirit, whether it be a psalm, a lullaby, or an Indian chant. Attention should be called to important changes in viewpoint or feeling, the denotation of certain ambiguous words, the connotation of various passages, the tone color, demanded variations in force and time. It is at this point that the choir should be made to realize that its task is like that of the solo interpreter of literature, is to recreate the thoughts and feelings which existed in the mind and heart of the poet as he wrote.¹

Voice and Diction Exercises. Part of every choir rehearsal may well consist of voice and diction exercises. Anyone with sensitive ears must be aware that most of us fail to realize in conversation the beauties of our language. The interpretation of poetry demands far more of the voice than even the most inspired conversation. Exercises are available in

¹Robinson and Thurston. Op. cit., p. 35.

most speech text books. Each advancement made through such exercises should be applied to words and phrases chosen from the poem in use and simultaneity of articulation increases with the number of voices. Beauty of vocal diction will add enormously to the attractiveness of performance.

Fun-Poems. Now is the time in the procedure to have fun. Choose a rhyme or jingle that has a very strong rhythm. If the director speaks or moves or taps to the rhythm or the swing of the lines, he will have the strength of the gross muscles assisting the voice. Tapping is quiet if the finger tips of the hands come together on the beat. A good way to set pace before starting the words is to say, "one-two, one-two", with both director and choir members tapping in rhythm. It is best to use only one fun poem at a rehearsal. The fun poem may be spoken and enjoyed in three to five minutes. A different fun poem should be used at every rehearsal until quite a number are in the repertoire. Changing about keeps them all fresh. With a breathing exercise, the diction drill and the fun poem should take 10 minutes, and 20 minutes are left to develop the program of poetry adopted. A 30-minute rehearsal is long enough for children; only 20 minutes at most should be used for primary children. Crown-ups only should use an hour in rehearsal.¹

¹Enfield, Gertrude. Verse Choir Value and Technique. p. 33, 34.

Costumes

The appearance of a choir upon the stage is important. As the eye is supposed to assist the ear, the dress of the speakers should harmonize with the content of the program and with each other.

Robes. A vested choir of any sort is an impressive one. Robes lend dignity to the appearance of the group, but are far from being a necessity. The wearing of robes gives choir members courage and countenance, as any costume is likely to do.

Uniform Dresses or Suits. Some choirs of women wear no uniform except white dresses. The effect is very good. Texas State College for Women in Denton, Texas, has a nice-appearing speech choir. The girls all wear a basic pattern formal of very simple design and a sash of school colors. The identical dresses erase the effect of individuals and emphasize the effect of the group. Whatever is adopted as the official robe should always be suitable and in good taste.

The identical dress is not essential for verse choirs, but it enhances the effect of unity in the program. This visual aid will heighten the auditory image of the group voice for the listeners.

Settings

The verse choir, like a group in oratorio, needs little setting on its stage except the background. In an auditorium the usual curtains are satisfactory. A large femset at each extreme of the proscenium arch adds to the effect.¹

THE DIRECTOR AND THE SPEAKING CHOIR

A Competent Director

In choral speaking, as in most undertakings, a competent director is the most important factor for success. By analyzing the qualifications of the leaders of the movement and of other successful directors, the qualities listed below seem to be the most desirable. Perhaps few of even the most experienced embody all of these qualities, but they will offer a challenging ideal for those who aspire to undertake a difficult task.

Must Know and Love Poetry. One who is to direct a speaking choir needs to know and love poetry. He should have read widely both classic and modern work and have developed a basis of judgment as to the intrinsic merits of poetic literature and its suitability for choral interpretation. He should understand the forms of verse and be able to recognize the different types of rhythm and meter. For example, he may well know the

¹Enfield, Gertrude. Loc. cit., pp. 77, 78, 79.

difference between the narrative ballad and the lyric ballad, to appreciate the appropriateness of both to choral interpretation and the necessary difference in treatment.

Must Have a Sensitive Ear. The director must have a sensitive ear, sensitive to the expressiveness of melodic tunes, to delicate and subtle variations of pitch and force, and vocal quality, to perfect unison, to pleasing harmony, to dissonance and to many kinds of rhythmic patterns.¹ He uses these means to set down his impression of life's wonder, its mystery, its significance, and its high adventure as he interprets the poetry with the choir.

Must Possess Leadership Qualities. The director must possess that quality of leadership which makes people delight to follow him. He must have a gift for inspiring confidence, enthusiasm for his literary project, zeal for work and conviction of the importance of perfection in detail. He must be able to command and exact obedience and to make people think. He should be gracious in accepting and considering suggestions and yet remain master of the whole situation. He must know his business.²

Must Have an Imagination. The director must have an imagination, that can hear in the mind's ear the vocal effect that is desired. The ability to call upon the mental image of sight, smell, taste, touch, motor activity, temperature and pain is

¹Robinson and Thurston, Op. cit., p. 29.

²Crocker and Eich. Op. cit., p. 139.

also valuable in making the meaning behind the words vivid to the members of the choir. Even more vital is the imagination to summon and fuse into the consciousness a definite mood or have a vision to perceive meanings and beauties far beyond those represented to most readers by letters on a page.

Must be Able to Read Well. The director may or may not follow the plan of reading each poem to the group before starting work upon it. If he does use that method and reads poorly he will be sure to fail in kindling the spark of enthusiasm which is a necessary beginning of the flame of success. In any case it is almost certain that the choir will not speak a poem with more intelligence or inspiration or sympathy than is possessed by the one who leads. The director's voice, whether or not it is beautiful, must be flexible and responsive to the inner urge of "the developed soul". It must be capable of wide range in tonal elements, of a wide range in pitch. He must be a respecter of words for their sounds as well as their sense.¹

Should Have a Good Audience Sense. He must know what audiences like. In building his program, he must employ unity, coherence, emphasis, contrast, humor, balance, and good taste, so that the audience goes away refreshed in spirit.

Of these factors, good taste is particularly important. The conductor must have it in abundance. There should be no desire to show off. In fact, the best leader is the one who is

¹Robinson and Thurston. Op. cit., p. 31.

least noticeable in the finished performance. He stands so as to be as unobtrusive as possible.¹

Conducting the Choir

Whether or not the director should conduct the choir in the manner of music directors is sometimes debated. In her article, Evelyn K. Abraham advocates such direction to "realize the atmosphere of the poem".² The leader may use both hands, one to direct phrasing and rhythm, and the other to regulate timing.

Direction at rehearsal may consist of an extensive system of visible signals, including the use of the hands and head. In general the size and strength of the movement is indicative of the degree of force desired and the height of the hand, of the pitch. The up and down movement of the hand may even trace out very definitely the tune pattern. There follows a brief catalog of hand movements and their possible meanings, which may be suggestive of many others. Suggested movements are:

hand raised, palm forward - "Ready!"

descending hand, index finger extended at a certain point - "Go!"³

hand raised suddenly high, palm toward the speakers - "Stop!"

hand beating out the rhythm a trifle ahead of the speaking group - increase of speed;

¹Crocker and Eich. Op. cit., p. 139

²Abraham, E. K. The Danger of Choral Speech. Good Speech, vol. 4 No. 26 (Jan. to Mar., 1935).

³Robinson and Thurston. Op. cit., p. 37.

hand pulling back on the beat - slower speed;
 hand beating time with bouncing movements to
 each side in turn - strongly rhythmical;
 upraised finger reaching for the beats of the
 rhythm - lifted, vibrant, spiritual tone;
 flat, open hand striking an imaginary object -
 dull, solid tone;
 vertical hand, cutting out the rhythm shortly-
 series of short staccato syllables;
 flat hand tracing large, prostrate figure eights
 with increasing vigor - "Keep going and building
 and don't pause for breath!"
 clenched fist striking an imaginary barrier to
 strike the rhythm - low, strong, hammering speech;
 fist pounding out rhythm at a continually higher
 level - "Build, build, build!"
 long, horizontal stroke of the prone hand - smooth
 tone;
 two hands raised supine, as if in entreaty -
 supplicating tone;
 open hand thrown up and out from body - "Let go!"
 hands stretched forward and up with outspread
 fingers - "Give all you have!"
 index finger raised well over the head - "Climax!"

MATERIALS FOR CHORAL SPEAKING

Choice of Materials

The material suited to choral speech is necessarily limited, and when these limits are transgressed the speech choir loses its value as an artistic instrument, for personal thought and emotion cannot be expressed by the group; only poetry or prose that voices thought and feeling that is universal, racial, or national, or the expression of a class or type - indeed, that which speaks for 'us' rather than for 'me', or 'you' - comes within the bounds of suitability.¹ As the search for such material - and subsequently the provision of copies for the choir - often presents serious difficulties of time and opportunity to the choir-director, a collection of poems chosen primarily for their choral content has been made at the close of this thesis.

The First Selections

It is fatal to the enjoyment and success of choral work if the material chosen for the first lessons is too difficult. The result of beginning with material which is too advanced is inevitably discouragement and finally distaste. The truth of the matter lies in the old adage, that you must learn to walk before you can run. A choir should begin on material that is

¹Swann, Mona. An Approach to Choral Speech. p. 13.

quite simple in theme and pattern, and which is as rhythmic and as universal in appeal as a folk song. It is important also that these first studies should have melodic quality and a strong human interest. Lullabies, ritual chants, labor rhymes, marching songs and verse of a kindred nature give just this opportunity for unifying the choir, helping them in timing and in gaining that vitality of expression which is to lay the foundation for all their future work together.

In these first selections also, they should learn how to phrase, how to build to a climax, how to control tone, how to differentiate between meter and rhythm, how to respond swiftly and truly, and sensitivity to the different moods and situations which the words present.¹

Type of Material

The material one chooses for a verse-speaking choir is very important. It is a matter for congratulation that material selected for the use of choral verse-speaking has been in general of good literary quality. A vast store of material may be found in poetry, old work lilts, ballads with refrains, choruses from Greek drama and passages from the Old Testament. When these are used in modern times, something of the feeling of deep satisfaction experienced by those who first used them is realized, for there is recreation of something which was rooted

¹Cullan, Marjorie. The Speech Choir. pp. 33-34.

deep in the life of a people.¹

Poetry for Verse Choirs

We divide poetry into four types: the lyric, the dramatic, the narrative, and the inspirational. This division is convenient but should not be adhered to absolutely, since there is much overlapping.

Lyrics. Let us consider first the lyric poetry. There is so much of it that one finds it all about, in every library, reading room and school. It should be always beautiful, rich either in beauty of conception or imagery, wholesome or lofty in sentiment. It is quiet, thoughtful, sincere. It instills a love of the beautiful, love of home, loyalty to a cause or principle, devotion to country, love of nature.

Lyrics are usually short. They should contain the pure essence of poetic genius, the beauty of words and fine feeling. They are to poetry what chamber music is to the world of music.

In verse choir work lyrics call for delicate enunciation. The words should be spoken with careful precision. There is little story value to assist the listeners in catching the words. They must be enunciated in so clipped and accurate style that they will not be misunderstood. In lyric poetry the work is largely unison, with no movement. The appeal is made through the voice alone; that is why the enunciation and tone must be

¹Corp, C. Op. cit., p. 20.

right.¹

Very good lyrice for primary grades are: "My Garden" by Thomae Edward Brown; "To Make a Prairie" by Emily Dickinson; "The Fairies Have Never a Penny to Spend", and others.

For the middle grades: "Silver" by Walter De La Mare; "A December Day" and "Stare" by Sara Teasdale.

Good lyrice for the upper grades are "Daffodile" by Wordsworth; "Moonson" by Mildred Perryman; and "Barter" by Sara Teasdale, and many more.

Adult choirs may use "Apee and Ivory" by Alfred Noyee; "Lake Isle of Innisfree" by William Butler Yeats; and "Barrel Organ" by Alfred Noyes.

Dramatic Poetry. Dramatic poetry should be vigorous, ewift moving, usually gripping. The tempo ie often fast which demands clipped enunciation, otherwise the coherence ie lost in the heroic tone. The latter depicts a variety and power of emotion. It hae sweep and flare.

Dialogue ie often used in dramatic poetry. Those that have eolo parte are chosen for fine voices and dramatic ability. There must be close timing eo ae not to break the rhythm when a eolo voice followe the chorue, or the chorue ewinge in after the solo voice. In dialogue, the two or more voices must play euccessfully to each other.²

Because dramatic poetry ie usually full of action, it

¹Enfield, Gertrude. Op. cit., pp. 50, 51.

²Enfield, Gertrude. Loc. cit., p. 55.

appeals instantly to our American audience.

Not all dramatic poetry is tragic, or even serious. "The King's Breakfast" by A. A. Milne is quite humorous and full of action. "Pirate Don Durk of Dowdee" by Mildred Perryman is stirring and full of whimsical humor. For adult choirs, "The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes is very dramatic.

Narrative Poetry. Something that tells a story will easily hold the attention of the listeners. Narrative poetry should be given with smooth steady rhythm unless the text or content calls for increasing or diminishing of the tempo; even then there should be an early return to the basic tempo.

When the choir is giving a narrative poem in unison, particular attention should be given to enunciation. When each speaker enunciates clearly and distinctly, the composite voice of the choir will be perfectly coherent and the listeners will catch every word. The effect will be pleasing and satisfying. On the other hand, it is disappointing and exasperating to be able to catch only snatches of what one suspects to be a very good story.

The tone of the narrative voice should be sympathetic with the events of the story and with the emotional experience of the characters. There should be a oneness of feeling of emotional conception on the part of the choir members to assure a pure tone color. This color should be definite and clear.¹

¹Enfield, Gertrude. Loc. cit., pp. 60, 61.

Mother Goose rhymes are delightful narratives for primary grades. Other good ones are "The Little Turtle" by Vachel Lindsay; "Little Foxes" by A. A. Milne; and "Pigs and Pets" by Alice Higgins.

For the middle grades these are recommended: "Tillie" by Walter De La Mare; "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" by Edward Lear; and "Yesterday in Oxford Street" by Rose Fyleman.

For upper grades: "Fog" by Carl Sandburg; "Columbus" by Joaquin Miller"; and "Minever Cheevey" by Edward A. Robinson.

For adult choirs: "Lochinvar", ballad; "The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes; and "Daniel" by Vachel Lindsay.

Inspirational Poetry. No poet desires his verse to be always whispered in a corner. Few poems can be fully enjoyed until they have been spoken aloud correctly and fittingly.

Enlightened peoples have always responded to poets' appeals to the divine. Singers and writers constantly find a reception for the so-called inspired and inspiring literature in poetic form. The Psalms of the Hebrews, the Epics of the Greeks, the chants and liturgy of the Christian Church, the chants of pagan people - all are supposedly inspired poetry and are considered effective in lifting the emotions to a high spiritual plane.

The use of inspirational material in the choir brings its benefits. The tempo is measured, often slower than in any other number on the program. There is a richness of tone quality; there is a dignity and repose of style, very stately and impressive. The words are carefully finished. It is in these

poems and chants that the ability to sustain tones is developed.

Inspirational materials for the primary grades include "The Year's at the Spring" by Browning; "Candle Lighting Song" by Arthur Kitchner; and "A Christmas Folk Song" by Lizette Reese.

Material for the middle grades: "Stars" by Sara Teasdale; "Psalm 24", David; and "The First Autumn" by Marshall Schnact.

For the upper grades: "A Chant Out of Doors" by Margarite Wilkinson; "Lincoln, the Man of the People" (first and last stanzas) by Edwin Markham; "Merlin and the Gleam" by Tennyson; and "Prayer to a Mountain Spirit" by Mary Austin.

Material for adult choirs: "To Helen" by Edgar Allen Poe; "Hang Me Among Your Winds" by Lew Sarett; "Wind in the Pine" by Lew Sarett; and "The Shepherd and the King", Psalms.

Ballads

The most useful ballads for choral speaking are those where many characters are indicated, and where lines spoken by characters are introduced. The acting parts may be assigned to solo speakers, and the rest of the chorus used for the narration. Many of our old ballads are suitable for treatment of this kind, especially where the action is lively and the incidents varied.

When selecting ballads the director should avoid those that are too long. Often a ballad is too full of stark tragedy

to be usable; sometimes it may depict horrible and unnatural crimes; again, the dialect may be too difficult for the group to master. All of these possibilities make it necessary for the director to choose ballads carefully and wisely.

Some suitable ballads are "Robin Hood and Allen-a-Dale", "The Wraggle Taggle Gypsies", "The Barring of the Door", "Lochinvar" and "Good King Wenceslas".

John Hampden's little book, Ballads and Ballad Plays, and Francis J. Olecott's book, Story-Telling Ballads, are especially recommended.

FUNDAMENTALS OF CHORAL SPEAKING

Basic Requirement

The choir members must realize that there is a basic requirement for speaking together. They have to keep in step, and must "get the swing" of the lines they say. Three things make the swing. They are rhythm, meter, and rate.

Rhythm. The joy of rhythm is instinctive. Rhythm is always present in oral expression. It is more free than meter. Rhythm is the stressed and unstressed melody of the expression of thoughts given to poetry in order to give a logical communication to the ideas of the poem. It is the practical expression of deep emotion. Rhythm may be a recurring pattern or a flowing movement. It is wise to study poems of imitative sound

patterns or marching poems, such as "Marching Along" by Robert Browning.

In the reading of poetry, the metric beat will receive a secondary stress and the rhythm of the meaning and of the emotion will be dominant.

Meter. In the interpretation of poetry by the choir the group should be encouraged to recognize definite forms of measured beats in poetry, to grasp the meter of the poems. Meter is a definite pattern of regularly recurring light and heavy beats in poetry. It will be noticed that people walk in beats, and many take a light step and a heavy step in metrical fashion. Poetry is fashioned in the same way, with heavy and light regular beats combined in different patterns. Ballads have decided metrical patterns, and anyone can recognize the brisk tripping meter of a ballad such as that of "The Wraggle Taggle Gypsies".¹

All the verse-speaking choir needs to know about meter is that there are strong beats at definite intervals and that the beats can be sounded out. The meter can be established by letting individuals read lines.

Rate. The character of a verse tells you the pace at which it needs to be said. Some poems have a dominant speed throughout. Others change their rate with each stanza. Some even change their tempo in each line or on a phrase. The poem becomes more interesting to the listener as he recognizes rate in your expression. Variation of rate is the principal element

¹Hedde and Brigrance. Op. cit., pp. 409-411.

that makes speaking a live affair. The simple jingles and rhymes that the group will speak at first have dominant rates.

Essential Tools for Artistry in Speech

For successful choral speaking, mumbling and inhibited speech in an individual have to give way before the demands of a group speaking together with sufficient clarity to be fully intelligible to an audience. Some very essential tools for the improvement of speech can be acquired through choral speaking in the terms that follow:

Pitch. Americans have been accused of having poorly pitched voices. People abroad speak of the American voice. When questioned as to the meaning, they say that most American men talk through their noses and that American women have thin, shrill speech. We know that this is not true of all Americans.

Pitch is the highness or lowness of tone. A person needs to be able to use consciously different pitches in choral speaking. Medium pitch is used for selections expressing a satisfying emotional reaction or matter-of-fact narrative. Medium or normal pitch is also employed in selections that are conversational, ordinary, unemotional, descriptive. High or light pitch is generally applied to expressions of joy. It is also heard in description of small or trivial affairs and in childish speech. When the dominant pitch employed is low, be it in the speech of man or woman, the expression tends to convey

weight. Sombre thoughts, crucial situations, and great emotional responses demand a low pitch. You need to think the pitch which the idea seems to convey to you in working for pitch improvement.

Inflections. Interest and emphasis bring a change and variety of patterns into the voice. Inflection is the secret of live and meaningful interpretation. The inflection depends upon your appreciation of the thought and its various shades of related meaning. It also depends upon the responsiveness of the vocal instrument and the ability to glide freely and smoothly from one pitch to another. Flexibility of voice is needed to secure this control. Scale practice is very beneficial in attaining a greater range and elasticity in speech.

Climax. This means in speech practice a gradual rise, by phrases, clauses or words, from a lower to a higher level of intensity. Climax is one way to attain emphasis.

Emphasis. The manner in which a word or phrase is made to stand out from its surroundings when spoken is by emphasis. It indicates a meaning or the thought-bearing word. It is easy, however, to overemphasize or to fail to give sufficient emphasis.

Stress. This is a primary force of emphasis. It results from the amount of force used in utterance.

Pause. This is considered the strongest form of emphasis. Pause is effective to give the audience time to reflect. It also prepares them for what follows. Pause allows listeners a chance to become mentally ready for the climax.

Tone and Resonance. With the assistance of the vocal resonators, the cavities of the nose, mouth, throat, chest, the tone produced by the vocal bands can be effectual. Through choral speaking students can be shown the effectual way of using the resonating chambers.¹

FORMS OF PRESENTATION OF THE SPEECH CHOIR

In order to develop the theme of the verse-speaking choir and make it a clear and tangible idea, several different arrangements may be used in developing the program into a harmonious whole. Consider these arrangements which a beginning choir can use with profit.

Reading in Unison

The unison arrangement at first glance appears to be the simplest and easiest. All the voices speaking the same words at the same time. But the preparation is really quite exacting, since it is far more a problem to train 25 voices to harmonize than small groups of four or five. In reading in unison, the group and leader must decide, after much experimentation, where the pauses are and how long these should be. They must decide where the rising and falling inflections come.

¹Rasmussen, Carrie. Choral Speaking for Speech Improvement. p. 70.

These should be marked on the individual copies of the script for each reader to memorize. Each reader should try to blend his voice into that of the group so that it does not stand out. All voices should sound like the tone of one instrument.

Dialogue

This is used in conversational material. As it is the speaking of individuals one to the other, it gives opportunity to those with fine tone quality and excellent diction to have leading roles and thus enhance the whole rendition. Dialogue gives a pleasing variety to a program, and stimulates the interest of the listeners. It is a change from unison work, too much of which tends to produce a feeling of heaviness. The soloists are supported by the chorus which stands back of them and speaks the narrative lines. When the entire poem is dialogue with no narrative lines, the choir may be divided into groups, each group taking the part of one person and answering each other as the conversation proceeds.

Line-a-Child

This type of presentation is very enjoyable and very valuable because it gives "bits" to a number of speakers. Poems suitable for this type usually begin with lines which should be spoken by the group which tend to set the stage for the lines

in which a number of things are listed, named or described. Such lines are given to as many individual speakers as are needed. When these are finished there should be concluding lines to be spoken by the choir.

Antiphonal

Religious literature or liturgy is often given in this manner and is very effective. Antiphonal work is the responding of one group to another in chants, poetry or rhythmic prose of an inspirational character. It should be consistent in mood, and the tone should be full, resonant, and at times sustained.

Solo and Chorus

Ballads are well suited to this type of choral work. The person reading the solo parts must keep in mind the total rhythm, pace, and mood of the ballad. The choir will catch and reflect these from the soloist.

CHORAL SPEAKING AS AN AID TO WORSHIP

Youth's Need in Worship

The speaking choir is essentially a youth movement. As

such, what may it contribute to worship that is of value and interest to young people? As a first step to answering that important question it may be well to ask another. What aids to Christian worship are conspicuously lacking among today's youth?

Familiarity with Scriptures. The secondary public school system of the United States frowns upon the teaching of religion. The regular chapel exercise with the reading of the scriptures has given way to the student assembly programs of activity and "pep". Little opportunity remains for quiet contemplation of a higher power. Slight attention, if any, is given to the Bible as literature, even in the college curriculum.

The family altar of worship has given way to the radio and the family Bible is a dust-covered antique.¹ When the home and school fail to follow the old Hebrew injunction: "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way and when thou liest down and when thou risest up,"² the growing generation becomes relatively ignorant of the literature of worship.

Opportunity for Expression. Worshipers are too often concerned with receiving only. They do not empty their own vessels that they may receive. They passively sit in church and try to take what the pastor gives. George W. Fiske suggests that for the average church attendant, "'Stop, Look,

¹Thureton. Choric Speech as an Aid to Worship. p. 9.

²Dent. 6:7.

Listen!' is about the limit of his participation. In addition to this wholly passive program, he is expected to pay, and to sing, if he happens to be in the mood for it. Some churches invite lay participation in a few responses also, but how much active worshipping is there? Protestant worship is mostly in the passive mood."¹

To the first main need then, that of acquaintance with the worship of the Scriptures, may be added the need of opportunity for activity and creativity in worship.

The Need of the Church

Concerning the possibility of improving the present service of worship, Von Ogden Vogt writes,

There are undreamed possibilities of noble worship before us. Our opportunities and advantages are many. At the concert, the people are given no share in the production. The experience, more or less stifled within itself, tends to grow less and less in its most valuable elements and to center itself on the enjoyment of the technical and formal merits of the work of art. The church has a chance to present its great conceptions in forms of beauty no less enchanting than any others and to enhance the imaginative grasp of those conceptions by the vivid processes of their popular expression and celebration.²

Participation in Praise. Worship in the sense of praise demands action since praise is psychologically impossible without some element of active participation. Instinctively one's mind turns to singing as the natural expression of praise.

¹Fiske, G. W. The Recovery of Worship. p. 238-9.

²Vogt, Von Ogden. Art and Religion. p. 164.

Yet many never participate in singing and never can with a feeling of creative joy because for them singing is not the most natural and effective means of expression. Many of these same people, however, could find artistic group expression in choral speaking.

Again one may think of the responsive reading as the opportunity for personal participation in worship. With the all too noticeable lack of harmony, rhythm, spirit and tempo in the average responsive reading, there is little opportunity for expression of acceptable praise to the Author of beauty and harmony. The distracting elements outweigh the message content. The rhythmic and poetic qualities necessary for successful responsive reading have led many to abandon it altogether from the service of worship.¹

Concerning this problem, Willard Sperry writes:

It is urged that the Psalms are our world's great manual of personal devotion and to drop them out of the service would mean an irreparable loss. By the responsive reading of the Psalter we become more familiar with the Psalms....It is urged, moreover, that the people have little enough to do in the average service as it is, and that to deprive them of the Psalms is simply to ostracize them in the dubious interests of a minister and a choir who can neither say anything as beautiful nor sing anything better. The Psalms have, as almost nothing else in our order of worship, the sanction of unbroken centuries of history and yet I can only conclude where I began, with the admission that the average responsive reading as used in most churches, whether from its particular place in the order or worship, its scrappy content, or its infelicitous and liturgically inaccurate rendering lacks the full reality of other parts of the service. Various remedial measures have been suggested; a new method of getting the Psalms read, fresh editions of readings.²

¹Vogt, Von Ogden. Modern Worship. p. 84

²Sperry, Willard. Reality in Worship. p. 217-219.

Beauty in Worship. Mr. Sperry states further that:

What perplexes one is the almost entire absence of any fresh artistic impulse in the conception and the conduct of worship....Our present ineffectualness in worship lies in our failure to reaffirm the temper and technique of the artist. We are too often content with a drastically criticized body of religious truth. We do not realize that this body of truth must be forever recreated in new significant forms.¹

Meeting the Need Through Choric Speech

It is not claimed nor suggested that choric speech may be a panacea for all ailments of modern worship services. The following suggestions are offered as one means of attempting to meet the needs expressed by leaders of religious education.

Youth's Need. Young people may prepare to receive by giving. Choral reading may serve as a motivation to supply the need of more familiarity with the Scriptures, and also serve as a creative activity of worship. Careful guidance and the inspiration of a trained leader will be necessary to keep young people from falling into the pitfalls of monotonous reading of the Psalms without entering into the spirit in which these hymns of triumph and praise were written. A wide gulf of artistry separates mere reading of Scriptural passages and the recreation of the soul experiences of Abraham, Moses, David, Paul or St. John. It is possible that while entering into the spirit of Biblical literature for choral interpretation some

¹Sperry, Willard. Reality in Worship. p. 234.

essence of sincere worship may carry over into their personal experiences; however, this does not necessarily follow.

The hope of bettering the future of worship lies in the training of the youth to more active participation and more reverence in worship. Adults are less pliable and less open to conviction.¹

The Need of the Church. Perhaps the remedy lies not in discarding old forms and modes of worship, but in perfecting them, in enriching them with added beauty and dignity.

Consider responsive reading. The minister reads a part of a verse and the congregation, often without guidance or preparation, is expected to respond as one with the last of the verse. In praising God through hymns of worship the congregation is not left without leadership, for there is the conductor as well as the choir setting the tempo and directing the expression of praise. It is conceivable that responsive reading might become a dignified and beautiful means of expressing praise were as much care and preparation given to the reading of the Psalms as that now given to the hymns. A speaking choir, with a conductor directing the audience, might lead the church to nobler expressions of praise.²

¹Fiske, G. W. Op. cit., p. 243

²Thurston. Op. cit., p. 12.

AN EASTER PROGRAM OF CHORAL SPEAKING

Easter Moods for Choral Speaking

The director of choral speaking will find in the splendor of Eastertime a perfect occasion for a program by his choir. Easter, the most glorious season in the whole cycle of feasts, is celebrated with solemn and religious observances, or with joyful expressions of springtime happiness. If the mood be fervent or festive, the choral speaking choir can present the moving drama of the Resurrection or the symbolic ritual of spring. For high school assemblies or the annual spring concert, the following suggestions offer a variety of each type of choral speaking: antiphonal, group work, solo with refrain, unison, part speaking, and cumulative. Biblical selections and poems may be dramatized, with musical interludes provided by the glee club or the school orchestra to produce an integrated Easter entertainment.

Easter Selections for Choral Speaking Programs

"Easter Morning", Louise Abney; "Easter", Grace Noll Crowell; "Consider the Lilies", William C. Gannett; "The Prayer", Caryll Houselander; "The Fountain Song", Eugene O'Neill; "An Easter Carol", Christina G. Rossetti; "Mary", Margaret E. Sangster; "A Madrigal", Clinton Scollard; "Let Easter Day Be

Glad", Nelson D. Sweeny; "An Easter Canticle", Charles H. Towne; "The World Itself", The Oxford Book of Carols; "Song of Solomon II:8-17"; "Easter Gospel", Mark XVI:1-7; "The Women at the Tomb", Matthew XXVIII:1-7; "Mary at the Sepulchre", John XX:11-18; "The Upper Room", Luke XXIV:36-47.

Settings and Costumes for Easter

In the school, whether a setting is simple or elaborate, of course, depends upon the school budget; but with the concentrated efforts and wholehearted cooperation of the vocational, art, and home economics departments very beautiful staging can be planned for the program.

Setting Plan 1. The choir members form a cross on a platform. A bright light should illuminate the human cross. Accentuate the purely religious theme by having the choir wear white gowns or choir robes.

Setting Plan 2. Group the choir on the steps before an altar decorated with flowers, ferns, and lighted candles.

Setting Plan 3. Place a Gothic church window in the center of the stage. Group the choir on steps in front of the window.

Setting Plan 4. Assemble the choir before the door of a sepulchre in a garden on Easter Morn. The green grass effect may be rented from the funeral home.

DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS

When to Give Public Demonstrations

To take a new group and attempt to prepare a public demonstration is as dangerous a thing as one can do in choral speaking. It is never to be thought of as a new form of entertainment to be used for exhibition purposes. To use it in that way is to destroy its spirit. This does not mean a group should never appear in public.

Recitals. The London Verse Speaking Choir was founded in 1925 and met regularly until normal activities were interrupted by war conditions. When their work reached a stage in which those who listened to it would receive pleasure, it was shared with an audience, but always in the spirit of sharing with others something from which the group had received pleasure and profit.

Public performances occurred twice each year in London. The autumn recital was a recital of poetry, mainly lyric, given before Christmas. The spring recital was usually presented before Easter and consisted of verse drama with choruses, or, what is now known as choric drama. These recitals meant a year's work but they produced the variety they needed for eloquent movement and quickly varying speech and tone values.

For Educational Purposes. A purely educational purpose is another bona fide reason for the public appearance of a

choral speaking group.

The group and director appear with a desire to demonstrate to others in order to promote the development of the movement. For such a program only the simplest material should be chosen. The director explains each number, giving the reason for its choice in order that those listeners who are inspired to go and do likewise may more easily follow after.

Difficulties

High up in the list of difficulties is the welding of a group into a close and harmonious unit for, in choral speaking, a group must not only speak as one, but think and feel as one. This is not an easy thing to accomplish. A leader is indeed fortunate if a newly formed group is held together by some "thread of all-sustaining beauty", like loyalty to one another founded on years of association and friendship, or loyalty to an organization that it is trying to promote, or loyalty to one's school. Such a tie as this holds until the work has progressed far enough to make its own appeal.

Tuning and Timing. The blending of voices, particularly in sequence work where one voice has but a line, presents a delicate problem, for one must choose a voice which blends with the voice which has just spoken and the voice which is to follow. Beauty of voice is not sufficient. Here again is a peculiar problem. There may be a lovely voice so obviously

"cultivated" that it cannot be used with the group. Such a voice retards the progress of the work of drawing a disproportionate amount of attention to its presence. This is especially true when the owner of the melodious voice has no mental visualization of the poem's meaning.

Lack of Flexibility. The lack of flexibility of mind and body caused by years of habits of restraint and dignity produces a real difficulty for both conductor and members of a group. There will always be certain people - the "born to rule" type - who by temperament are unsuited to become members. Their very strength makes it almost impossible for them to merge harmoniously with a group.

Irregular Rehearsals. A minor, but ever present difficulty, if a group is composed of members scattered over a community, is the inability of all members to meet regularly. If the work is being done with a class in school this problem is, of course, happily solved.

Imitating the Director. There are some dangers which can, with care, be avoided. Imitation of the leader is one. Too confident members should not be allowed to rule the group. Individuality must be maintained but subordinated. Interpretation must not be allowed to become mechanical and the thought and sentiment of the poem must never be sacrificed to sound.¹

¹Corp, G. Op. cit., pp. 16, 17, 18.

Dangers

Some dangers and cautions that should be noted by all directors are the following:

- avoid cheap, elocutionary material;
- avoid material beyond the pupils' powers of appreciation and enjoyment;
- do not exploit your directing ability;
- avoid sing-song patterns and broken thoughts which result in jerky grouping or phrasing;
- avoid tone volume at the expense of good quality;
- avoid the choosing of "star" pupils for all solo parts;
- avoid using the choir simply as a show device;
- avoid mechanical direction.¹

Conclusions

In spite of these difficulties and dangers, choral speaking can succeed as an art of expression. There is positive proof that when poetry with a choric quality is thoroughly rehearsed and read together by a choir of trained speakers under the leadership of one, something is produced which is distinctive and effective in the portrayal of poetic values.

¹Abney. Op. cit., p. 35, 36.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF CHORAL SPEAKING

Benefits

In the varied reports of verse-speaking choir activities the following benefits are emphasized:

1. Loss of individual self-consciousness and inhibitions;
2. Unrealized freedom in individual expression;
3. Group enjoyment in the recreation of poetry;
4. Ease of memorization;
5. Voice consciousness with improvement in articulation, enunciation, voice quality and range;
6. Development of personality;
7. Carry-over values in normal life.

Limitations

Like all other interpretive arts, it has its limitations, and does not seek to transplant any other mode of expression.

1. It can never take the place of solo speaking in interpretation.
2. It is not a substitute for singing; although its foundation is harmony, it lacks melody.
3. Its best use is with literature specifically written for group use, or that which has been used in past centuries with groups, and objective rather than subjective poetry.

4. It has values over solo speaking in giving contrasts of light and dark voices, contrasts through use of solo speaking and unison speaking within the same poem, and contrasts through antiphonal work between groups.

5. To some the visual inspiration is much greater with massed groups than with a single personality; to others this is distracting.

6. Interpretation of thought is clearer than in singing.

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APPENDIX

An Anthology of Poetry Suitable for Choral Speaking

(Interpretation suggestions may be found with each selection.
Bibliographical sources are omitted for poems taken from the
collected works of well known authors.)

Art Thou Weary?

- Unison: Art thou weary, art thou languid,
Art thou sore distressed?
"Come to me", saith One, "and, coming,
Be at rest."
- Solo, : Hath he marks to lead me to him,
man if he be my guide?
- Unison: "In his feet and hands are wound-prints,
And his side."
- Solo: Is there diadem, as monarch,
That his brow adorns?
- Unison: "Yes, a crown, in very surety,
But of thorns".
- Solo: If I find him, if I follow,
What his guerdon here?
- Unison: "Many a sorrow, many a labor,
Many a tear."
- Solo: If I still hold closely to him,
What hath he at last?
- Unison: "Sorrow, vanquished, labor ended,
Jordan passed."
- Solo: If I ask him to receive me,
Will he say me nay?
- Unison: "Not till earth and not till heaven
Pass away."
- Solo: Finding, following, keeping, struggling,
Is he sure to bless?
- Unison: "Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs,
Answer, Yes."

--John M. Neale (Stephanos)
(The Methodist Hymnal, N.Y.,
Eaton and Mains, cl. 905.)

Jis' Blue

Girls

Unison: Jis' blue, God,
Jis' blue.

Ain't prayin' exactly jis' now, --
tear blind, I guess,
cain't see my way through.

You know these things
I ast for so many times, --
Maybe I hadn't orter repeated like the pharisees do;
but I ain't stood in the market-place,
it's jis' 'tween me and you.

And you said, "Ast", --
somehow I ain't astin' now,
And I hardly know what to do.

Hope jis' sorter left, but Faith's still here, --
Faith ain't gone, too ...

I know how 'tis --- a thousand years
is a single day with you.

And I ain't prayin' tonight, God, --
jis' blue.

--Etta Baldwin Oldham.

Life

Unison: Forenoon and afternoon and night, -- Forenoon,
And afternoon, and night, -- Forenoon, and --- what!
The empty song repeats itself. No more? (solo man)
Yea, that is life: Make this forenoon sublime,
This afternoon a psalm, this night a prayer,
And Time is conquered, and thy crown is won.

--Edward Rowland Sill.

(from Sill's Poetical Works, New York:
Houghton-Mifflin, 1916.)

The Crucifixion

- Unison: Jesus, my gentle Jesus,
Walking in the dark of the Garden --
The Garden of Gethsemane,
Saying to the three disciples:
- Man solo: Sorrow is in my soul --
Even unto death;
Tarry ye here a little while,
And watch with me.
- Unison: Jesus, my burdened Jesus,
Praying in the dark of the Garden --
The Garden of Gethsemane.
- Man solo: Saying: Father,
This bitter cup,
This bitter cup,
Let it pass from me.
- Unison: Jesus, my sorrowing Jesus,
The sweat like drops of blood upon His brow,
Talking with His Father,
While the three disciples slept.
- Man solo: Saying: Father,
Oh, Father,
Not as I will,
Not as I will,
But let Thy will be done.
- Solo man: Oh, look at black-hearted Judas --
Sneaking through the dark of the Garden --
Leading his crucifying mob.
Oh, God!
Strike him down!
Why don't You strike him down,
Before he plants his traitor's kiss
Upon my Jesus' cheek?
- Unison: And they take my blameless Jesus,
And they drag him to the Governor,
To the mighty Roman Governor
Great Pilate seated in his hall, --
Great Pilate on his judgment seat,
- Solo man: Said: In this man I find no fault.
I find no fault in Him.
- Unison: And Pilate washed his hands.

- Unison: But they cried out, saying:
 Crucify Him!
 Crucify Him!
 Crucify Him!
 His blood be on our heads.
 And they beat my loving Jesus;
 They spit on my precious Jesus;
 They dressed Him up in a purple robe,
 They put a crown of thorns upon His head,
- Women: And they pressed it down --
- Men: Oh, they pressed it down --
- Unison: And they mocked my sweet King Jesus.
- Unison: Up Golgotha's rugged road
 I see my Jesus go.
 I see Him sink beneath the load,
 I see my drooping Jesus sink.
 And then they laid hold on Simon,
 Black Simon, yes, black Simon,
 And Simon bore the cross.
- Unison: On Calvary, on Calvary,
 They crucified my Jesus.
 They nailed Him to the cruel tree,
 And the hammer!
- Women: The hammer!
- Men: The hammer!
- Unison: Rang through Jerusalem's streets.
- Women: The hammer!
- Men: The hammer!
- Unison: The hammer!
 Rang through Jerusalem's streets.
- Women: Jesus, my lamb-like Jesus,
- Men: Shivering as the nails go through His hands;
- Women: Jesus, my lamb-like Jesus,
- Men: Shivering as the nails go through His feet.
- Women: Jesus, my darling Jesus,
- Men: Groaning as the Roman spear plunged His side;

- Women: Jesus, my darling Jesus,
- Men: Groaning as the blood came spurting from His wound.
- Unison: Oh, look how they done my Jesus.
- Women: Mary,
Weeping Mary,
Sees her poor little Jesus on the cruel cross.
Mary,
Weeping Mary,
Sees her sweet, baby Jesus on the cruel cross,
Hanging between two thieves.
- Unison: And Jesus, my lonesome Jesus,
Called out once more to His Father,
Saying:
- Solo man: My God,
My God,
Why hast Thou forsaken Me?
- Unison: And He drooped His head and died.
- Unison: And the veil of the temple was split in two,
The midday sun refused to shine,
The thunder rumbled and the lightning wrote
An unknown language in the sky.
What a day! Lord, what a day!
When my blessed Jesus died.
- Unison: Oh, I tremble, yea, I tremble,
It causes me to tremble, tremble,
When I think how Jesus died;
Died on the steps of Calvary,
How Jesus died for sinners,
Sinners like you and me.

--James Weldon Johnson.

(from God's Trombones. New York: Viking
Press, 1927.)

The Search
Psalm XLII

- High women: As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after Thee, O God.
- Medium women: My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?
- Low women: My tears have been my meat day and night,
While these continually say unto me, where is thy God?
- All women: These things I remember,
and pour out my soul within me,
How I went with the throng, and led them to the house
of God,
with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude
keeping holy day.
- Unison: Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God:
For I shall yet praise Him,
Who is the health of my countenance,
And my God.
- High men: My soul is cast down within me:
Therefore do I remember Thee from the land of Jordan,
and the Hermans, from the hill Mizar.
- Medium men: Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts:
All thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me.
- Low men: Yet the Lord will command His loving kindness in the
day-time,
And in the night His song shall be with me,
Even a prayer unto the God of my life.
- All men: I will say unto God my rock, why hast Thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the
enemy?
As with a sword in my bones, mine adversaries re-
proach me;
While they continually say unto me, where is thy God?

Unison: Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
 And why art thou disquieted within me?
 Hope thou in God:
 For I shall yet praise Him,
 Who is the health of my countenance,
 And my God.
 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an
 ungodly nation:
 O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.
 For Thou art the God of my strength; why hast Thou
 cast me off?
 Why go I mourning because of the oppression
 of the enemy?
 O send out Thy light and Thy truth;
 Led them lead me:
 Let them bring me unto Thy holy hill,
 And to Thy tabernacles.
 Then will I go unto the altar of God,
 Unto God my exceeding joy:
 And upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God.

Unison: Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
 And why art thou disquieted within me?
 Hope thou in God:
 For I shall yet praise Him,
 Who is the health of my countenance,
 And my God.

--R. G. Moulton.

(from Modern Reader's Bible. New York:
 Macmillan. 1912.)

Prayer

Unison: Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friends?
 For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

--Alfred Tennyson

(from Idylls of the King.)

Awareness

All: God .. let me be aware.

Low: Let me not stumble blindly down the ways,
Just getting somehow safely through the days,

High: Not even groping for another hand,
Not even wondering why it all was planned,

Low: Eyes to the ground unseeking for the light,

High: Soul never aching for a wild-winged flight,

All: Please, keep me eager just to do my share.
God .. let me be aware.

All: God .. let me be aware.

Low: Stab my soul fiercely with other's pain,

High: Let me walk seeing horror and stain.
Let my hands, groping, find other hands.

Low: Give me the heart that divines, understands,
Give me the courage, wounded, to fight.

High: Flood me with knowledge, drench me in light.

All: Please, keep me eager just to do my share.
God .. let me be aware.

-- Miriam Teichner.

(from Quotable Poems comp. by Clark-Gillespie,
New York: Willett, Clark and Colby, 1928.)

Sources of Power

(A compilation of Scripture)

- All: As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
- Medium men: Canst thou by searching, find out God?
- Medium women: Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high,
I cannot attain unto it.
- High women: It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do?
- Low men: Deeper than hell, what canst thou know?
- Low women: For as the heavens are higher than the earth
- Medium women: So are His ways higher than our ways
- High women: And His thoughts than our thoughts.
- All: Oh, that I knew where I might find Him that I
Might come before His presence.
- Solo: Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall
I flee from thy presence?
- All women: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell
in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there
shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand
shall hold me.
- All: Yea, the darkness, hideth not from thee, even the
night shall be light about me, for the night
shineth as the day, and the darkness and the light
are both alike to thee.
- Solo: If with all your hearts ye truly seek me, ye shall
surely, surely find me, saith the Lord.
- Women: Seek and ye shall find,
- Men: Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

All: For everyone that seeketh, findeth, and unto him
that knocketh it shall be opened.

Medium men: Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after
righteousness for they shall be filled.

All: Eye hath not seen, ear hath heard, neither hath
it entered into the heart of men, the things
prepared for those who love Him.

(from International Jour. of Religious
Education 10:19-20. No. 9, May 1934.)

Psalm 24

Unison: The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof;
The world and they that dwell therein.
For he hath founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the floods.

Girls: Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in His holy place?

Boys: He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,
and hath not sworn deceitfully.
He shall receive a blessing from the Lord,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
This is the generation of them that seek after Him,
That seek thy face, of God of Jacob.

Girls: Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lift up, ye ancient doors;
And the King of Glory shall come in.

Solo boy: Who is this King of Glory?

Boys: The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle.

Girls: Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Yea, lift them up, ye ancient doors:

Unison: And the King of Glory shall come in.

Girl solo: Who is this King of Glory?

Unison: The Lord of Hosts,
He is the King of Glory.

--R. G. Moulton.

(from Modern Reader's Bible. New York:
Macmillan, 1912.)

A Ballad of Trees and the Master

Unison: Into the woods, my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.

High
solo: But the olives they were not blind to Him,

Medium
solo: The little gray leaves were kind to Him;

Low solo: The thorn-tree had a mind to Him

Unison: When into the woods He came.

Unison: Out of the woods my Master went,
And he was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.

Low solo: When Death and Shame, would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last:

High
solo: 'Twas on a tree they slew Him .. last

Unison: When out of the woods He came.

--Sidney Lanier.

Calvary

Unison: Friendless, and faint, with martyred steps and slow,
Faint for the flesh, but for the spirit free
Stung by the mob that came to see the show,
The Master toiled along to Calvary;

Women: We jibed Him, as He went, with houndish glee,

Unison: We cursed His vengeless hands thrice wretchedly.--
And this nineteen hundred years ago.

Unison: But after nineteen hundred years the shame
Still clings, and we have not made good the loss
That outraged faith has entered in His name.
Ah, when shall come love's courage to be strong!
Then tell me, O Lord, tell me .. Lord how long
Are we to keep Christ writhing on the cross?

--Edwin Arlington Robinson.

(From Modern American Poetry, comp. by
Louis Untermeyer. New York: Harcourt,
Brace & Co. 1930)

Outwitted

Men: He drew a circle that shut me out --
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

Women: But love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in.

--Edwin Markham.

(From Quotable Poems comp. by Clark
Gillespie. New York: Willett, Clark
and Colby. 1928.)

If He Should Come

Unison: If Jesus should tramp the streets tonight,
Storm-beaten and hungry for bread,
Seeking a room and candle light
And a clean though humble bed,
Who would welcome the Workman in,
Though He came with panting breath,
His hands all bruised and His garments thin --
This Workman from Nazareth?

Men: Would rich folk hurry to bind His bruise
And shelter His stricken form?
Would they take God in with His muddy shoes
Out of the pitiless storm?

Women: Are they not too busy wreathing their flowers
Or heaping their golden store --
Too busy chasing the bubble hours
For the poor man's God at the door?

Unison: And if He should come where churchmen bow,
Forgetting the greater sin,
Would He pause with a light on His wounded brow,
Would He turn and enter in?
And what would He think of their creeds so dim,
Of their weak, uplifted hands,
Of their selfish prayers going up to Him
Out of a thousand lands?

--Edwin Markham.

The Creation

Unison: And God stepped out on space,
And He looked around and said:

Men: I'm lonely ..
I'll make me a world.

Unison: And far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.
Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,

Men: And God said: That's good!

Unison: Then God reached out and took the light in his hands,
And God rolled the light around in his hands
Until He made the sun;
And He set that sun a-blazing in the heavens,
And the light that was left from making the sun
God gathered it up in a shining ball
And flung it against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between
The darkness and the light
He hurled the world;

Men: And God said: That's good!

Unison: Then God Himself stepped down --

High women: And the sun was on His right hand,

High men: And the moon was on His left;

Low women: The stars were clustered about His head

Low men: And the earth was under His feet.

Unison: And God walked and where He trod
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up.

Unison: Then He stopped and looked and saw
That the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over the edge of the world
And he spat out the seven seas ...

High men: He batted His eyes, and the lightnings flashed ..

Low men: He clapped his hands, and the thunders rolled ..
And the waters above the earth came down,

Unison
men: The cooling waters came down.

Unison
women: Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed.
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms.
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around His shoulder.

Unison: Then God raised His arm and He waved His hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And he said: Bring forth! Bring forth!
And quicker than God could drop His hand,
Fishes and fowls and beasts and birds
Swam the rivers, and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.

Men: And God said: That's good!

Unison: Then God walked around,
And God looked around
On all that He had made.

High
women: He looked at His sun,

High men: And He looked at His moon,

Low
women: And He looked at His little stars;

Low men: He looked at His world

Low men: With all its living things,

Unison
men: And God said: I'm lonely still.

- Unison: Then God sat down
On the side of a hill where He could think;
By a deep wide river He sat down;
With His head in His hands,
God thought and thought.
- Men: Till He thought: I'll make a man!
- Unison: Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled Him down;
And there the Great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the
night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of His hand,
This Great God
- Women: Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till He shaped man in His own image;
- Unison (strong and brightly):
Then into it He blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.
- Women: Amen
- Men: Amen.

--James Weldon Johnson.

(from God's Trombones. New York:
Viking Press. 1927.)

Hymn for Thanksgiving Day

- Men: The sickle is dulled of the reaping and the threshing-
 floor is bare;
 The dust of night's in the air;
 The peace of the weary is ours:
 All day we have taken the fruit and the grain
 and the seeds of the flowers.
- Women: The ev'ning is chill,
 It is good now to gather in peace by the flames of
 the fire;
 We have done now the deed that we did for our
 need and desire:
 We have wrought our will.
- Unison: For deep in our hearts
 We wish to be thankful through tears and fat without
 change,
 Knowing that here Thou has set for the spirit
 a range.
 We would play well our parts.
- Unison: Making America throb with the building of souls
 and the glory of good;
 Yea, and we would,
 And before the last autumn we will
 Build a temple from ocean to ocean where deeds
 never still,
- Unison: Melodiously shall proclaim
 Thanksgiving forever that Thou has set here to our
 hand,
 So wondrous a mystical harvest, that Thou dost
 demand
 Sheaves bound in Thy name.
- Men: Yea, supersubstantial sheaves of strong souls
 that have grown,
 Pain to be known
 As the corn of Thine occident field.
- Women: O yielder of all, can America worthily thank Thee
 till such be her yield?
- Men: In the mellowing light
 Of the goldenest days that precede the gray days
 of the year,

Men: We sing thee our harvesting song and we pray Thee
to hear,
In the midst of Thy night:

Unison: Labor is given to us
Let us give thanks!
Power worketh through us,
Let us give thanks!
Not for what we have,
(So might speak a slave)
Not for garnering,
Gratefully we sing,
But for the mighty thing
We must do, travelling!
For our task and for our strength;
For the journey and its length;
For our dauntless eagerness;
For our humbling weariness;
For these, for these, O Father,
Let us give thanks!
For these, O Mighty Father,
Take Thou our thanks!

--Shaemus O'Sheel.

(from The Speech Choir. New York:
Harper & Bros. 1937.)

The Church

- All: This (church) is no dead pile of stones and unmeaning timber. It is a living thing. ...
When you enter it you hear a sound - a sound as of some mighty poem chanted. Listen long enough, and you will learn that it is made up of the beating of human hearts of the nameless music of men's souls - that is, if you have ears. If you have eyes, you will presently see the church itself - looming mystery of many shapes and shadows, leaping sheer from floor to dome. The work of no ordinary builder!
The pillars of it go up like the brawny trunks of heroes.
- High: The sweet human flesh of men and women is moulded about its bulwarks, strong, impregnable:
- Low: The faces of little children laugh out from every corner-stone.
- Medium: The terrible spans and arches of it are the joined hands of comrades.
- High: And up in the heights and spaces there are inscribed the numberless musings of all the dreamers of the world.
- All: It is yet building - building and built upon.
- Low: Sometimes the work goes forward in deep darkness.
- High: Sometimes in blinding light:
- Medium: Now beneath the burden of unutterable anguish,
- High: Now to the tune of a great laughter and heroic shoutings like the cry of thunder.
- All: Sometimes, in the silence of the night-time, one may hear the tiny hammerings of the comrades at work up in the dome - the comrades that have climbed ahead.

--Charles Rann Kennedy.

(from The Servant in the House. Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press and Harper & Bros.)

Four Little Foxes

- All: Speak gently, Spring, and make no sudden sound;
 Light: For in my windy valley, yesterday I found
 New-born foxes squirming on the ground -
- All: Speak gently.
 Walk softly, March, forbear the bitter blow;
- High: Her feet within a trap, her blood upon the snow,
 The four little foxes saw their mother go -
- All: Walk softly.
 Go lightly, Spring, Oh, give them no alarm.
- Light: When I covered them with boughs to shelter
 them from harm,
 The thin blue foxes suckled at my arm -
- All: Go lightly.
 Step softly, March, with your rampant hurricane;
- High: Muzzling one another, and whimpering with pain,
 The new little foxes are shivering in the rain -
- All: Step softly.

--Lew Sarett.

(from Slow Smoke. Henry Holt & Co.)

Mountains in Twilight

- All: Mountains have a dreamy way
 Of folding up a noisy day
 In quiet covers, cool and gray.
 Only mountains seem to know
 That the shadows come and shadows go
 Till stars are caught in pools below.
 Only mountains, dim and far,
 Kneeling now beneath one star
 Know how calm dark valleys are

--Leigh Buckner Hanes.

(from Poetry Arranged for the Speaking
 Choir. Robinson and Thurston.)

The Ghosts of the Buffaloes

Low Solo: Last night at black midnight I woke with a cry,

All: The windows were shaking, there was thunder on high,
The floor was a-tremble, the door was ajar,

Women: White fires, crimson fires, shown from afar,

Low solo: I rushed to the dooryard.

All: The city was gone.

Medium
solo: My home was a hut without orchard or lawn.

All: It was mud-smear and logs near a whispering stream,

Medium
solo: Nothing else built by man could I see in my dream.

All: Then ---

Men: Ghost-kings came headlong, row upon row;
Gods of the Indians, torches aglow.
They mounted the bear and the elk and the deer,
And eagles gigantic, aged and sere,
They rode long-horn cattle, they cried, "A-la-la."
They lifted the knife, the bow and the spear,

High
women: They lifted ghost-torches from dead fires below,
The midnight made grand with the cry, "A-la-la".

Low
women: The midnight made grand with a red-god charge,

High men: A red-god show,

All: A red-god show,

High
women: "A-la-la,"

Low
women: "A-la-la,"

High men: "A-la-la,"

All: "A-la-la."

- Men: With bodies like bronze, and terrible eyes
 Came the rank and the file with catamount cries,
 Gibbering, yipping, with hollow-skull clacks,
 Riding white bronchos with skeleton backs,
 Scalp-hunters, beaded and spangled and bad,
 Naked and lustful and foaming and mad,
- All: Flashing primeval demoniac scorn,
 Blood-thirst and pomp amid darkness reborn,
 Power and glory that sleeps in the grass
- Women: While the winds and the snows and the great rains pass.
- Men: They crossed the gray river, thousands abreast,
 They rode out in infinite lines to the west,
- All: Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,
- High women: Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home
 The sky was their goal where the star-flags are
 furled,
- All: And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.
 They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,
- Low men: And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.
- Women: And the wind crept by,
 Alone, unkempt, unsatisfied,
 The wind cried and cried -
 Muttered of massacres long past,
 Buffaloes in shambles vast ...
- Low women: An owl said: "Hark, what is a-wing?"
- High women: I heard a cricket carolling,
- Low women: I heard a cricket carolling,
- High men: I heard a cricket carolling.
- All: Then ...
 Snuffing the lightning that crashed from on high
 Rose royal old buffaloes, row upon row.
 The lords of the prairie came galloping by.
- Low men: And I cried in my heart,
- High men: "A-la-la,"

Low men: "A-la-la."

Low men: A red-god show,

All: A red-god show,

Women: "A-la-la,"

High men: "A-la-la,"

All: "A-la-la."

Buffaloes, buffaloes, thousands abreast,
A scourge and amazement, they swept to the west
With black bobbing noses, with red rolling tongues,
Coughing forth steam from their leather-wrapped lungs.

Women: Cows with their calves,

Men: Bulls big and vain,
Goring the laggards,

All: Shaking the mane,

Men: Stamping flint feet,
Flashing moon eyes,

All: Pompous and owlish, shaggy and wise.
Like sea-cliffs and caves resounded their ranks

Men: With shoulders like waves, and undulant flanks.
Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam

Women: Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,
The sky was their goal where the star flags are
furled,

All: And on past those for golden splendors they whirled.
They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,

Low men: And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

High
women: I heard a cricket's cymbals play,

Low men: A scarecrow lightly flapped his rags,
And a pan that hung by his shoulder rang,
Rattled and thumped in a listless way,

Low
women: And now the wind in the chimney rang,

High
women: The wind in the chimney

High men: The wind in the chimney

All: The wind in the chimney
Seemed to say;-
Dream, boy, dream,
If you anywise can.
To dream is the work of beast or man.
Life is the west-going dream-storm's breath,

Low women: Life is a dream, the sigh of the skies,
The breath of the stars that nod on their pillows
With their golden hair mussed over their eyes.

High women: The locust played on his musical wing,
Sang to his mate of love's delight.

Low men: I heard the whippoorwill's soft fret.

High women: I heard a cricket carolling,

Low women: I heard a cricket carolling,

High men: I heard a cricket say:

High women: "Good night,

Low women: good night,

High men: Good night,

Low men: good night, --

All: good night."

--Vachel Lindsay.

(from Collected Poems. New York:
Macmillan Co.)

Ring Out, Wild Bells

All: Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light,
The year is dying in the night,
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Men: Ring out the old,

Women: Ring in the new,

All: Ring, happy bells, across the snow.
The year is going, let him go;

Men: Ring out the false,

Women: ring in the true.

Men: Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor;

Women: Ring in redress of all mankind.

Men: Ring out a slowly dying cause
And ancient forms of party strife;

Women: Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Men: Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless, coldness of the times,
Ring out, ring out my mournful rimes,

Women: But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Men: Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;

Women: Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Men: Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wards of old,

Women: Ring in the thousand years of peace

All: Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land.
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

--Alfred Lord Tennyson.

Crossing the Bar

Low: Sunset
 Light: and evening star
 All: And one clear call for me,
 Low: And may there be no meaning at the bar
 All: When I put out to sea.
 Light: For such a tide as moving seems asleep,
 All: Too full for sound and foam,
 And that which drew from out the boundless deep
 Low: Turns again home.
 Light: Twilight and evening bell
 Low: And after that the dark,
 All: Any may there be no sadness of farewell
 When I embark.
 All: For though from out the bourne of time and place
 The flood may bear me far,
 Light: I hope to see my pilot face to face
 All: When I have crossed the bar.

--Alfred Lord Tennyson.

Psalms 121

Light: I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
 from whence cometh my help.
 Dark: My help cometh from the Lord,
 which made heaven and earth.
 Light: He will not suffer thy foot to be moved;
 he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

- Dark: Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall
neither slumber nor sleep.
- Light: The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is
Thy shade upon thy right hand.
- Dark: The sun shall not smite thee by day,
nor the moon by night.
- Light: The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil;
He shall preserve thy soul
- All: The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy
coming in from this time forth, and even for
evermore.

--The Bible.

A Psalm of Praise: Psalm 100

- Solo I: Make a joyful noise unto the Lord,
All ye lands,
- Soprano: Serve the Lord with gladness;
- Second
soprano: Come before His presence with singing.
- Alto: Know ye that the Lord, He is God;
- Unison: It is He that hath made us, and not we
Ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep
Of his pasture.
- Solo II: Enter into His gates with thanksgiving
And into his courts with praise,
- Unison: Be thankful unto Him and bless His name
- Solo III: For the Lord is good;
- Unison: His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endureth
to all generations.

--The Bible.

Wind in the Pine

Unison: Oh, I can hear you, God, above the cry
 of the tossing trees -
 Rolling your windy tides across the sky,
 And splashing your silver seas
 Over the pine,
 To the water-line
 Of the moon.
 Oh, I can hear you, God.
 Above the wail of the lonely loon -
 When the pine-tops pitch and nod -
 Chanting your melodies
 Of ghostly waterfalls and avalanches,
 Swashing your wind among the branches
 To make them pure and white.
 Wash over me, God, With your piney breeze,
 And your moon's wet-silver pool;
 Wash over me, God, with your wind and night,
 And leave me clean and cool.

--Lew Sarett.

The Loon

Unison: A lonely lake, a lonely shore,
 A lone pine leaning on the moon;
 All night the water-beating wings
 Of a solitary loon.
 With mournful wail from dusk to dawn
 He gibbered at the taunting stars -
 A hermit soul gone raving mad,
 And beating at his bars.

--Lew Sarett.

High Flight

Unison: Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
 And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
 Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
 Of sun-split clouds, and done a hundred things
 You have not dreamed of -- wheeled and soared and swung
 High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there,
 I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
 My eager craft through footless halls of air ...

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
 I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace.
 Where never lark, or even eagle flew ---
 And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
 The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
 Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

--John G. Magee.

Cool Tombs

Light: When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tomb, he
 forgot the copperheads and the assassin..in the
 dust,
 in the cool tombs.

Dark: And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of common and
 Wall Street; cash and collateral turned ashes..
 in the dust,
 in the cool tombs.

Light: Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red
 haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder?
 does she remember? .. in the dust,
 in the cool tombs?

Dark: Take any streetful of people buying clothes and gro-
 ceries, cheering a hero or throwing confetti and
 blowing tin horns..tell me if the lovers.. are
 losers..tell me if any get more than the lovers..
 in the dust..
 in the cool tombs.

--Carl Sandburg.

Fire

Dark: Fire,
 Light: Fire, Lord!
 All: Fire gonna burn ma soul!

Dark: I ain't been good
 Light: I ain't been clean,--
 All: I been evil, low-down, mean.

Dark: Fire,
 Light: Fire, Lord
 All: Fire, gonna burn ma soul!

Light: Tell me, brother,
 Do you believe
 If you wanta go to heaven
 Got to moan an' grieve?

Dark: Fire,
 Light: Fire, Lord!
 All: Fire, gonna burn ma soul!

Dark: I been stealin',
 Been tellin' lies,
 Had more women
 Than Pharaoh had wives.

Dark: Fire,
 Light: Fire, Lord!
 All: Fire gonna burn ma soul!
 I means fire, Lord!
 Fire gonna burn ma soul.

--Langston Hughes.

The Little Turtle

All: There was a little turtle,
Light: He lived in a box,
Medium: He swam in a puddle,
Dark: He climbed on the rocks.
Light: He snapped at a mosquito,
Medium: He snapped at a flea
Dark: He snapped at a minnow,
All: And he snapped at me.
Light: He caught the mosquito,
Medium: He caught the flea,
Dark: He caught the minnow,
All: But he didn't catch me.

--Vachel Lindsay.

Christmas Bells

Solo: I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carola play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Unison: Of "peace on earth, good will to men"!
Solo: And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Unison: Of "peace on earth, good will to men"!

Solo: Till, ringing, singing on its way
The world revolved from night till day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime

Unison: Of "peace on earth, good will to men".

--Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

I Must Go Back

Unison: I must go back to Bethlehem -

Solo 1: Oh, I must travel far
To find again the stable beneath the gleaming star.

Solo 2: I must leave the crowded cities for the quiet little
town
Where the shepherds watch their flocks by night
And the dreaming stars smile down.

Solo 3: Hastening through the silent streets,
Along a darkened way,
I shall find again the Manger
Where the sleeping Baby lay.

Solo 4: And this I know:
When I arrive, and see the Child again,
My weary heart will glow anew
With peace, good will to men;

Soprano: For there is peace in Bethlehem,

Alto: And holiness is there -

Unison: I must go back to find the Babe
And worship Him in prayer.

--Louise Abney.

Mystic Night

Part I: This is the night when the black cats prow!;

Part II: This is the night when the black cats yowl;

Unison: Me-ow! Me-ow-ow! Pat! Pat!

Part I: This is the night when the brownies prance;

Part II: This is the night when the brownies dance;

Unison: Tip-tippy-tip! Tip-tippy-toe!

Part I: This is the night when the goblins moan;

Part II: This is the night when the goblins groan;

Unison: Yow-oo! Yow-oo! Yow-oo-oo-oo!

Part I: This is the night when the witches brew;

Part II: This is the night when the witches stew;

Unison: Mumble-dee-dee! Mumble-dee-do!

Part I: This is the night when the winds blow ill;

Part II: This is the night when the winds blow shrill;

Unison: Whoo-oo! Whoo-oo! Whoo-oo-oo!

Part I: This is the night when the trees bend low;

Part II: This is the night when they wave to and fro;

Unison: Flippety-flop! Flippety-flip!

Part I: This is the night when the lanterns leer;

Part II: This is the night when the lanterns jeer;

Unison: He-he-he! Ha-ha-ha! Ho-ho!

Part I: This is the mystic night of the year;

Part II: This is the mystic night we all fear.

Unison: Pat!! Me-ow!! Whoo-oo-oo!!

--Grace Rowe.

A Goblin Lives in our House

Unison: A goblin lives in our house, in our house,
in our house.
A goblin lives in our house all the year round.

1st child: He bumps

2nd child: And he jumps

3rd child: And he thumps

4th child: And he stumps,

5th child: He knocks

6th child: And he rocks

7th child: And he rattles at the locks.

Unison: A goblin lives in our house, in our house, in our house,
A goblin lives in our house all the year round.

--From the French.

Hallowe'en

Part I: Do you know why
I like Hallowe'en?

Part II: Because such funny
Sights are seen.

1st child: Witches in tall black steeple hats
Ride on broomsticks with their cats.

2nd child: Goblins, dressed like scary ghosts,
Hide behind the trees and posts.

3rd child: Brownies caper here and there
Working mischief everywhere.

4th child: Jack-o-lanterns, sad or gay,
Frown or grin the night away.

5th child: Bats and owls fly through the gloom
Flapping their wings with a zoom, zoom, zoom.

6th child: Blustering winds shriek loud and moan,
Making the tall trees stretch and groan.

Part I: Now you know why
I like Hallowe'en -

Part II: Because such funny
Sights are seen.

--Grace Rowe.

Whistle, Whistle, Old Wife

Dark: "Whistle, old wife, and you'll get a hen."
 Light: "I wouldn't whistle, no not I, if you could give me ten."
 Dark: "Whistle, whistle, old wife, and you'll get a cock."
 Light: "I wouldn't whistle, no not I, if you gave me a flock!"
 Dark: "Whistle, whistle, old wife, and you'll get a coo,"
 Light: "I wouldn't whistle, no not I, if you could give me two."
 Dark: "Whistle, whistle, old wife, and you'll get a gown."
 Light: "I wouldn't whistle, no not I, for the best one in the town."
 Dark: "Whistle, whistle, old wife, and you'll get a man."
 Light: "Wheuple, whauple, wheuple, whauple, "I'll whistle if I can!"

--A Ballad.

The Mysterious Cat

Light: I saw a proud, mysterious cat,
 Dark: I saw a proud, mysterious cat,
 Too proud to catch a mouse or rat -
 Light: Mew, mew, mew.
 Light: But catnip she would eat, and purr,
 Dark: But catnip she would eat, and purr.
 And goldfish she did much prefer -
 Light: Mew, mew, mew.
 Light: I saw a cat- 'twas but a dream,
 Dark: I saw a cat- 'twas but a dream,
 Who scorned the slave that brought her cream -
 Light: Mew, mew, mew.

Light: Unless the slave were dressed in style
 Dark: Unless the slave were dressed in style,
 And knelt before her all the while -
 Light: Mew, mew, mew.
 Dark: Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
 Light: Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
 All: Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
 Dark: Oh, what a proud, mysterious cat,
 Light: Oh, what a proud, mysterious cat,
 All: Oh, what a proud, mysterious cat.
 Light: Mew, mew, mew.

--Vachel Lindsay.

The Three Little Kittens

Dark: Three little kittens lost their mittens;
 And they began to cry,
 Light: "Oh, mother dear,
 We very much fear
 That we have lost our mittens,"
 Dark: "Lost your mittens!
 You naughty kittens!
 Then you shall have no pie!"
 Light: "Mee-ow, mee-ow, mee-ow!"
 Dark: "No, you shall have no pie."
 Dark: The three little kittens found their mittens;
 And they began to cry,
 Light: "Oh, mother dear,
 See here, see here!
 See, we have found our mittens!"

Dark: "Put on your mittens,
You silly kittens,
And you may have some pie."

Light: "Purr-r, purr-r, purr-r."
Oh, let us have the pie!
"Purr-r, purr-r, purr-r."

Dark: The three little kittens put on their mittens,
And soon ate up the pie;

Light: "Oh, mother dear,
We greatly fear
That we have soiled our mittens!"

Dark: "Soiled your mittens!
You naughty kittens!"
Then they began to sigh,

Light: "Mee-ow, mee-ow, mee-ow."
Then they began to sigh,
"Mee-ow, mee-ow, mee-ow."

Dark: The three little kittens washed their mittens,
And hung them out to dry:

Light: "Oh, mother dear,
Do you not hear
That we have washed our mittens?"

Dark: "Washed your mittens!
Oh, you're good kittens!"

L. Solo: But I smell a rat close by,

Light: Hush, hush! Mee-ow, mee-ow."

All: We smell a rat close by,

Light: "Mee-ow, mee-ow, mee-ow."

--Eliza Lee Follen.

The Potatoes' Dance

Light voices: "Down cellar," said the cricket,
 Dark voices: "Down cellar," said the cricket,
 Unison: "Down cellar," said the cricket,
 "I saw a ball last night,

Light voices: "In honor of a lady,
 Dark voices: In honor of a lady,
 Unison: In honor of a lady,
 Whose wings were pearly white."

Light voices: "The breath of bitter weather,
 Dark voices: "The breath of bitter weather
 Unison: The breath of bitter weather,
 Had smashed the cellar pane."

Light voices: "We entertained a drift of leaves,
 Dark voices: We entertained a drift of leaves,
 Unison: We entertained a drift of leaves,
 And then of snow and rain."

Light voices: "But we were dressed for winter,
 Dark voices: But we were dressed for winter,
 Unison: But we were dressed for winter,
 And loved to hear it blow."

Light voices: "In honor of the lady,
 Dark voices: In honor of the lady,
 Unison: In honor of the lady
 Who makes potatoes grow."

Solo voice: "Our guest the Irish lady,
 Dark voices: "The tiny Irish lady,
 Light voices: "The airy Irish lady,
 Unison: "Who
 Makes
 Potatoes
 Grow."

II

Light voices: "Potatoes were the waiters,
 Dark voices: Potatoes were the waiters,
 Unison: Potatoes were the waiters,
 Solo voice: Potatoes were the band,

Another solo voice: "Potatoes were the dancers
 Kicking up the sand,"

Light voices (gaily, in very lively manner):

"Kicking up the sand,

Dark voices: "Kicking up the sand,

Unison: "Potatoes were the dancers
Kicking up the sand."

Dark voices: "Their legs were old burnt matches,

Light voices: "Their legs were old burnt matches,

Unison: "Their legs were old burnt matches,
Their arms were just the same,"

Solo voice: "They jigged and whirled and scrambled,

Light voices: Jigged and whirled and scrambled,

Dark voices: "Jigged and whirled and scrambled,
In honor of the dame,

Solo voice: "The noble Irish lady,
Who makes potatoes dance,

Light voices: "The witty Irish lady,

Dark voices: "The saucy Irish lady,

Unison: "The laughing Irish lady,
Who
Makes
Potatoes
France."

III

Solo voice (full, rich, resonant):

"There was just one sweet potato,
He was golden brown and slim.

Light voices: "The lady loved his dancing,

Dark voices: "The lady loved his dancing,

Unison: "The lady loved his dancing,

Solo voice: "She danced all night with him,

Unison: "She danced all night with him.

Solo voice (sympathetic in quality, adequate in volume):

"Alas, he wasn't Irish.

So when she flew away,

They threw him in the coalbin,

And there he is today,

Where they cannot hear his sighs

And his weeping for the lady.

Dark voices: "The glorious Irish lady,

Light voices: "The beauteous Irish lady,

Unison: "Who gives potatoes eyes."

--Anonymous.

Old King Cole

Part I: Old King Cole
Was a merry old soul,
Part II: And a merry old soul was he,
Part I: He called for his pipe,
And he called for his bowl,
Unison: And he called for his fiddlers three.
Part I: And every fiddler he had a fine fiddle,
Part II: And a very fine fiddle had he.
Part I: "Twee, tweedle dee, tweedle dee," went the fiddler,
Part II: And the fiddles went "Twee tweedle dee".
Unison: Oh, there's none too rare
As can compare
With Old King Cole and his fiddlers three.

--Nursery Rhyme.

St. Catherine

(Chorus of girls; group work, sectional or sequence)

All: St. Catherine, St. Catherine
O lend me thine aid,
And grant that I never
May be an old maid.

Section 1: A husband, St. Catherine,
Section 2: A good one, St. Catherine,
Section 3: But anyone better than
No one, St. Catherine.

Section 4: Rich, St. Catherine,
Section 5: Young, St. Catherine,
Section 6: Handsome, St. Catherine,
All: Soon, St. Catherine.

--Anonymous.

Johnny at the Fair

(Small group, sectional; girls in three sections)

Refrain:

Section 1: Oh dear, what can the matter be?
 Section 2: Dear, dear, what can the matter be?
 All: Oh dear, what can the matter be?
 Johnny's so long at the fair.

Section 1: He promised to bring me a farthing to please me
 Section 2: And then for a kiss, oh he said he would tease me.
 Section 3: He promised to buy me a bunch of blue ribbons
 All: To tie up my bonnie brown hair.

(Refrain as before)

Section 1: He promised to buy me a basket of posies
 Section 2: A garland of lilies, a garland of roses,
 Section 3: A little straw hat to set off the blue ribbons
 All: That tie up my bonnie brown hair.

(Refrain as before).

--Anonymous.

Jonathan Bing

Solo (a single narrator who tells the tale):

Poor old Jonathan Bing
Went out in his carriage to visit the King,
But everyone pointed and said,

Unison: "Look at that!
Jonathan Bing has forgotten his hat!"

Light voices (echoing the amazement): He's forgotten his hat!

Dark voices (deeper echo): He's forgotten his hat!

Solo-narrator: Poor old Jonathan Bing
Went home and put on a new hat for the King
But up by the palace a soldier said,

Solo (deep voice of authority): "Hi!
You can't see the King; you've forgotten your tie!"

Dark voices (echo): He's forgotten his tie!

Solo-narrator: Poor old Jonathan Bing.
He put on a beautiful tie for the King,
But when he arrived, the archbishop said,

Solo (boy's voice reflecting shocked amazement): "Ho!
You can't come to court in pyjamas, you know!"

Light voices (girls-echoing the shock):
"You can't come to court in pyjamas, you know!"

Solo-narrator: Poor old Jonathan Bing
Went home and addressed a short note to the King:
"If you please will excuse me,
I won't come to tea,
For home's the best place for all people like me."

Unison (echo): For home's the best place for all people like me.
Poor old Jonathan Bing!

--Beatrice Curtis Brown.

The Frog's Courting

Frog went a-courting and he did ride;	A-hum
Sword and buckler by his side;	A-hum
Across the river he did swim;	A-hum
"Pray, Miss Mouse, are you within?"	A-hum
He took that lady mouse on his knee	
An' said, "Miss Mousie, will you marry me?"	A-hum
Says she, "Before I think of that,	
I'll have to ask my uncle Rat,	A-hum
Not without uncle Rat's consent	
Would I marry the President,"	A-hum

Uncle Rat, he went to town	
To buy his niece a wedding gown;-	A-hum
What will the wedding supper be?	A-hum
A fried mosquito and a black-eyed pea.	A-hum

First came in was a bumble bee;	A-hum
Fiddle and fife upon his knee;	
Next came in was two little ants	
Fixin' themselves for to have a dance,	A-hum
Next came in was a butterfly	
Passin' the butter on the sly!	A-hum
Next came in was a garter snake	
Curled himself round the wedding cake,	A-hum

Next came in was a big Tomcat	
He gobbled the snake and the mouse and rat	A-hum
Frog sprung up and jumped in a well	
Wished that cat was down in ____!	A-hum

--An old folk song.

For refrain work, the girls may well say the lines and the boys the refrain, "A-hum". The tempo is fast to hold the mood.

The Table and the Chair

All: Said the table to the chair,
Dark: "You can hardly be aware
How I suffer from the heat,
And from chillblains on my feet.
Light: If we took a little walk
We might have a little talk;
Pray let us take the air,"
All: Said the table to the chair.
All: Said the chair unto the table,
Dark: "Now, you know we are not able;
How foolishly you talk,
When you know we cannot walk!"
All: Said the table with a sigh,
Dark: "It can do no harm to try.
I've as many legs as you!
Why can't we walk on two?"
All: So they both went slowly down,
And walked about the town
With a cheerful bumpy sound
As they toddled round and round
And everybody cried
As they hastened to their side,
Light: "See! the table and the chair
Have gone out to take the air!"
Dark: But in going down the alley
To a castle in a valley
They completely lost their way,
And wandered all the day;
Light: Till, to see them safely back,
They paid a Ducky-quack
And a Beetle, and a Mouse,
Who took them to their house.
All: Then they whispered to each other,

Light: "O delightful little brother,
What a lovely walk we've taken!
Let us dine on beans and bacon."

All: So the Ducky and the Beetle,
Brownie-Mousy and the Beetle
Dined and danced upon their heads
Till they toddled to their beds.

--Edward Lear.

Story of Creation

Dark: First He made a sun.

Light: Then He made a moon.

Dark: Then He made a possum.

Light: Then he made a coon.

All: All de other creatures
He made 'em one by one,
Stuck 'em on de fence to dry,
As soon as they was done.

Refrain

Light: Walk-eein,

Dark: Walk-eein,

All: Walk-in I say.

Light: Walk in de parlour and hear de banjo play.

Dark: Walk in de parlour and hear de niggers sing.

All: Watch de niggers fingers as he picks upon de string.

Light: Zing,

Dark: zing,

Light: zing,

Dark: zing,

All: zing, zing, zing, zing.

Light: Old mudder Eve
Couldn't sleep without a piller,

Dark: And the greatest man that ever lived
Was Jack, the Giant Killer,
Old Noah was a mighty man
And built a might ark.

Light: He got all the critters in
 Just before dark.

Refrain.

--Old American folk song.

This poem has everything interesting to children; a story, a real rhythm, which changes from the stanza to the refrain, the possibility of suggested action, as well as the need of expression, but it is placed in this section of rhythm because the rhythm is so marked. The poem lends itself well to two-part work.

More Rain, More Rest

All: De rain been a-rainin' for a week an' mo';
 It splarshin' in de gutter, it sousin' at de do';
 It mumble at de winder, it bumble on de eaves,
 It make long steppin's in de honey-shuck leaves.
 Me cyan't work taters, and we can't thin corn;
 Dar's gwine to be a famine, jis' as sure as you born;
 Dar's 'bleeged to be a famine, jis' as sure as you born;
 Sart, de Lawd boss de weather and de Lawd knows bes'.

Mo' rain, mo' res' -
Mo' rain, mo' res' -

Old Mr. Crow got de croup in his ches',
Old Mr. Turkey hen a drownin' on her nes';
Rain, rain, rain, and de gyarden weeds growin' -
Dey cyan't be no harvest whar dey ain't no hoein',
But de sweet water drummin'; no use for to fret,
Set peaceful in de cabin while you got de chance to set;
De Lawd brung de rain, and de Lawd know best',
Set right on yo' backbone and let de Lawd bless -

Mo' rain, mo' res' -
Mo' rain, mo' rest.

--Nancy Byrd Turner.

The Congo

- All: Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,
Barrel-house kings, with feet unstable,
Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table,
Pounded on the table,
Beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom,
Hard as they were able,
BOOM, Boom, BOOM,
With a silk umbrella and the handle of a broom,
BOONLAY, boonlay, boonlay, BOOM.
- Group 1: THEN I HAD religion, THEN I had a vision,
I could not turn from their revel in derision.
THEN I SAW THE CONGO, CREEPING THROUGH THE BLACK.
CUTTING THROUGH THE JUNGLE WITH A GOLDEN TRACK.
- Group 2: Then along that river bank
A thousand miles
Tattooed cannibals danced in files;
- Group 3: Then I heard the boom of the blood-lust song
And a thigh-bone beating on a tin-pan song.
- Group 1: And "BLOOD!" screamed the whistles and the fifes of
the warriors,
- Group 2: "BLOOD" screamed the skull-faced, lean witch-doctors;
- All: "Whirl ye the deadly voo-doo rattle,
Harry the uplands,
Steal all the cattle,
- Women: Rattle-rattle, rattle-rattle,
Bing!
- All: Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM!"
A roaring, epic, rag-time tune
From the mouth of the Congo
To the mountains of the Moon.
- Men: Death is an elephant,
Torch-eyed and horrible,
Foam-flanked and terrible.
- Group 1: Boom, steal the pygmies,
- Group 2: BOOM, kill the Arabs,
- Group 3: BOOM, kill the white men,

All: Hoo, Hoo, Hoo.

Women: Listen to the yell of Leopold's ghost
Burning in Hell for his hand-maimed host.

Men: Hear how the demons chuckle and yell
Cutting his hands off, down in Hell.

Women: Listen to the creepy proclamation,
Blown through the lairs of the forest-nation,
Blown past the white ants hill of clay,
Blown past the marsh where the butterflies plays -

Men: "Be careful what you do,
Or Mumbo-Jumbo God of the Congo,

All: And all of the other
Gods of the Congo,
Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you,
Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you,
Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you.

--Vachel Lindsay.

The Flag Goes By

All: Hats off!
Along the street there comes

Dark: A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums
A flash of color beneath the sky!

All: Hats off!
The flag is passing by!

Light: Blue and crimson and white it shines,
Over the steel-tipped, ordered lines.

All: Hats off!
The colors before us fly!
But more than the flag is passing by.

Dark: Sea-fights and land fights, grim and great,
Fought to make and to save the state;

Light: Weary marches and sinking ships;

Dark: Cheers of victory on dying lips;

Light: Days of plenty and years of peace;
 Dark: March of strong land's swift increase;
 Light: Equal justice, right and law,
 Stately honor and reverent awe;
 Dark: Sign of a nation, great and strong
 To ward her people from foreign wrong;
 Light: Pride and glory and honor, all
 Live in the color to stand or fall.
 All: Hats off!
 Along the street there comes
 A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums;
 And loyal hearts are beating high;
 Hats off!
 The flag is passing by!

--Henry Holcomb Bennett.

Gates and Doors

Solo: There was a gentle hostler
 (and blessed be his name!)
 He opened up the stable
 The night Our Lady came.
 Our Lady and Saint Joseph,
 He gave them food and bed,
 And Jesus Christ has given him
 A glory round his head.

Unison: So let the gates swing open
 However poor the yard,
 Let weary people visit you
 And find their passage barred;
 Unlatch the door at midnight
 And let your lantern's glow
 Shine out to guide the traveler's feet
 To you across the snow.

Solo: There was a courteous hostler
 (He is in Heaven tonight)
 He held Our Lady's bridle
 And helped her to alight;
 He spread clean straw before her
 Whereon she might lie down,
 And Jesus Christ has given him
 An everlasting crown.

Unison: Unlock the door this evening
 And let the gate swing wide,
 Let all who ask for shelter
 Come speedily inside.
 What if your yard be narrow?
 What if your house be small?
 There is a Guest whose coming
 Will glorify it all.

Solo: There was a joyous hosler
 Who knelt on Christmas morn
 Beside the radiant manger
 Where in his Lord was born.
 His heart was full of laughter,
 His soul was full of bliss
 When Jesus, on His Mother's lap,
 Gave him His hand to kiss.

Unison: Unbar your heart this evening
 And keep no stranger out,
 Take from your soul's great portal
 The barrier of doubt.
 To humble folk and weary
 Give hearty welcoming,
 Your breast shall be tomorrow
 The cradle of a King.

--Joyce Kilmer.

I Saw Three Ships

Light: I saw three ships come sailing in,
 All: On Christmas Day, On Christmas Day.
 Dark: I saw three ships come sailing in,
 All: On Christmas Day in the morning.

Light: And what was in those ships all three,
 All: On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
 Dark: And what was in those ships all three,
 All: On Christmas Day in the morning?

Light: Our Savior Christ and His Lady
 All: On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day.
 Dark: Our Savior Christ and His Lady,
 All: On Christmas Day in the morning.

Light: Pray, whither sailed those ships all three,
 All: On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
 Dark: Pray, whither sailed those ships all three,
 All: On Christmas Day in the morning?

Light: O, they sailed into Bethlehem,
 All: On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
 Dark: O, they sailed into Bethlehem
 All: On Christmas Day in the morning.

Light: All the bells on earth shall ring,
 All: On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
 Dark: And all the bells on earth shall ring,
 All: On Christmas Day in the morning.

Light: And all the angels in Heaven shall sing,
 All: On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
 Dark: And all the angels in Heaven shall sing,
 All: On Christmas Day in the morning.

Light: And all the souls on earth shall sing,
 All: On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day.
 Dark: And all the souls on earth shall sing,
 All: On Christmas Day in the morning.

Light: Then let us all rejoice again!
 All: On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day.
 Dark: Then let us all rejoice again!
 All: On Christmas Day in the morning.

--English carol.

The Holly and the Ivy

All: The holly and the ivy,
 Now are both well grown;
 Of all the trees that are in the wood
 The holly bears the crown:

All: Refrain: The rising of the sun,
 The running of the deer,
 The playing of the merry organ,
 Sweet singing in the choir.

Solo 1: The holly bears a blossom
 As white as lily flower;
 And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
 To be our sweet Savior:

Solo 2: The holly bears a berry
 As red as any blood;
 And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
 To do poor sinners good:

Solo 3: The holly bears a prickly,
 As sharp as any thorn;
 And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
 On Christmas Day in the morn:

Solo 4: The holly bears a bark
 As bitter as any gall;
 And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
 For to redeem us all:

All: The holly and the ivy
 Now are both well grown;
 Of all the trees that are in the wood
 The holly bears the crown:

Refrain.

--English carol.

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat

- Light: The Owl and the pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea green boat;
They took some honey, and plenty of money
Wrapped up in a five pound note,
- Medium: The Owl looked up to the moon above,
And sang to a small guitar;
- Dark: "O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love!
What a beautiful Pussy you are,-
- Medium: You are,
- All: What a beautiful Pussy you are!"
- All: Pussy said to the Owl: (light) "You elegant fowell!"
How charmingly sweet you sing!
- Dark: O let us be married - too long we have tarried,-
- All: But what shall we do for a ring?"
- Light: They sailed away for a year and a day
To the land where the Bong-tree grows,
- Medium: And there in a wood, a piggy-wig stood
With a ring in the end of his nose
- Dark: His nose
- All: With a ring in the end of his nose.
- Medium: "Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?" (light) Said the Piggy, "I will."
- All: So they took it away and were married next day
By the turkey who lives on the hill.
- Lt. & Med.: They dined upon mince and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon,
And hand in hand on the edge of the sand
They danced by the light of the moon,-
- Dark: The moon
- All: They danced by the light of the moon.

--Edward Lear.

Psalm 23

- All: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- Dark: He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
- Light: He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of
righteousness for his name's sake.
- Dark: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow
of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with
me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
- Light: Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of
mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over,
- All: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the
days of my life; and I will dwell in the house
of the Lord forever.

--The Bible.